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THE

REVELATION OF ST JOHN,

EXPOUNDED FOR THOSE WHO SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL, BY THE

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PREFACE.

THE Revelation of St John was for a long time a shut book to me. That it was necessary here to lay open a new path; that neither the course pursued in the older ecclesiastical, nor that of the modern Rationalistic exposition was to be followed, I never entertained a doubt. The constantly renewed attempts at fresh investigations resulted only in a better understanding of particular points, but accomplished nothing as to the main theme. I was not the less persuaded, however, that the blame of this obscurity lay not in the book itself, with the divine character of which I was deeply impressed, but in its exposition; and I did not cease to long for the time when an insight might be granted me into its wonderful depths. Several years ago, I was visited with what was, in other respects, a heavy season of affliction, which obliged me to discontinue for some months my official duties. I looked about for a rod and staff that might comfort me, and soon lighted on the Revelation. Day and night I pondered on it, and one difficulty vanished after another. At the period of my recovery, there was scarcely a point of any moment respecting which I did not think I had obtained light. I had still, however, after becoming well, to finish my Commentary on the Psalms. Then I went to my task with the greatest eagerness. The sad times of March 1848 did not interrupt, but rather expedited my labours.

It was my purpose to have issued the two volumes of the work simultaneously. But I have now resolved to bring out the first volume alone—because the Revelation has a very close relation to the wants of the present time, and I reckoned it my duty to endeavour, according to the best of my ability, that the rich treasury of counsel and comfort, which the Lord has provided for us in this book, should as soon as possible be made accessible to those who desire to possess it. Such as wish to obtain a glimpse

of the whole of the exposition, may find what they desire in the two treatises: The beast in the Apocalypse, Evang. Kirche-Zeitung, 1847, and: The thousand years' reign, Do. 1848.

The title shows that this work is intended for all who search the Scriptures. The remarks contain little of a grammatical nature. The text will present no difficulties to cultivated readers, even though not theologians, if they are only animated by an earnest desire to become thoroughly acquainted with the contents of the book.

Of the investigations which are usually brought into Introductions to the Apocalyse, that alone is presented here which respects the historical starting-point of the book, as being the only one which really has its proper place before the exposition. All besides is reserved for concluding treatises to be contained in the second volume.

Many readers will think there are too frequent quotations from the older Expositors, especially from Bengel. Such persons, however, should remember that their wants are not the only ones that require to be met. The experience I have already had in connection with my Commentary on the Psalms, has specially induced me not to be sparing in these quotations. Certainly the greater number of readers will be more pleased with this than if I had gone into greater length in stating and commenting on the views of others, which would have been of less service in regard to this book than almost any other in the Bible. The present times, too, urgently demand that we should disburden the exposition of sacred Scripture from all unprofitable matter, and instead of that should present what properly accords with its design, as declared in 2 Tim. iii. 16, and may constantly bring it to mind. That the ascetical element should create no prejudice against the necessity of scientific inquiries is taken for granted; and I hope that no reproach will in this respect be cast on me.

I am perfectly aware that this work is destined to meet with much disfavour from many who are united with me in faith. The persons whose concurrence I should have most highly prized, are precisely those in whom the exposition of Bengel, to which also I owe more than to any other for the explanation of particular parts, has taken deepest root; insomuch that an attack on it, which has made the Revelation dear and precious to them, will

scarcely be regarded by them in any other light than as an attack on the Revelation itself. But I am still not without confidence, that the method of exposition attempted here will by and bye make way, especially among those who are disposed to look more profoundly into the Old Testament, and in particular into its prophetical writings. For this is absolutely indispensable to a proper understanding of the Revelation. My confidence rests on the conviction, that I have not striven to foist in any thing, but to the best of my ability have sought merely to expound and enforce what is written.

In conclusion, I commend this work, the deficiencies of which I deeply feel, to Him who has given me strength to execute it thus far, and who has rendered it to myself a source of edification and comfort.

ERRATA.

Page 7, line 11, *for* to the, *read* and the.
,, 22, first note, *for* juber *read* jubet.
,, —, line 4, fourth note, *delete* seu potius relucebat.
,, 31, line 1, note, *for* remoramar, *read* remoramur
,, 32, line 3, note 2, *for* coel, *read* coelo.
,, 48, line 11, *for* Hos. *read* Hag.
,, 50, line 9, *for* meditating, *read* mediating.
,, 91, line 4, note, *for* anti, *read* ante.
,, —, line 5, do., *for* praesunta, *read* praesumta.
,, 96, line 11, *for* God's, *read* good.
,, 165, line 11, *for* good, *read* food
,, 337. line 33, *for* before, *read* upon.

THE

REVELATION OF SAINT JOHN.

ON THE TIME OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE BOOK.

THE older theologians proceeded almost uniformly on the supposition, that the Book of Revelation was composed in the closing period of Domitian's reign—an opinion that finds, in Vitringa especially, an excellent though brief defence. On the whole, however, little comparatively was done to establish this opinion on solid and satisfactory grounds; even Bengel did not go deeply into the matter. The feeling for the genuine historical interpretation of the Apocalypse was still not awakened, so that but little weight could as yet be attached to this most important inquiry, and it was passed hurriedly over. The interest felt in it was less on account of the exposition, than for the defence of the authority of the old ecclesiastical tradition, which had declared in favour of the composition under Domitian. But there being no right feeling awakened for the true historical interpretation, the power failed, in connection with that interest, to give a lucid exhibition of the proof. This can only be found when one understands how to obtain from many scattered indications a living image of the existing condition of the Seer, which forms the proper starting-point for the announcement of the future. Vitringa has some excellent observations in this respect, but they are confined to the seven epistles. In regard to the remainder of the Book, the question as to the historical starting-point can scarcely be said to be so much as mooted. With him, as with Bengel, and so many unfortunately even to our own day, the prophecy swims, as it were, in the air; and nothing, consequently, could be derived

from it for determining the period of its composition. In more recent times the position advanced originally by Grotius, Hammond, Lightfoot, for the purpose of understanding certain passages of the fate of Judaism, that the Book was composed before the destruction of Jerusalem, has been pretty generally acquiesced in. And on the authority especially of Ewald and Lücke the precise opinion, that the Apocalypse was composed under Galba, has obtained very general consent. By many it is uttered with a sort of naive confidence, and most of all by those who have brought almost nothing of an independent investigation to bear upon the subject.

We shall, first of all, examine the external testimonies that relate to the point at issue. From these we shall gather the result that, what Lampe has said in his Comm. on John i. p. 62, "all antiquity agrees in the opinion of Domitian's being the author of John's banishment," is no paradox, but the simple truth. For, the deviations from this result are on the part only of such as do not deserve to be heard and considered.

The series of testimonies for the composition under Domitian is opened by Irenæus. He says, B. V. c. 30, "For if it were necessary at present to declare plainly his name (*i.e.* the name of the person indicated by the number 666 in the Apocalypse xiii. 18), it might be done through him, who also saw the Apocalypse. For it was seen not long ago, but almost in our generation, toward the close of Domitian's reign."[1] Irenæus was in a position for knowing the truth. According to the beginning of the chapter, the numbers 666 (in opposition to the other reading 616) bear testimony to having seen John in the face.[2] He speaks not by way of conjecture or on constructive reasons, but as of a matter established beyond any possibility of doubt. He neither expressly refers, nor alludes to the passage, ch. i. 9, from which the opponents of the composition under Domitian might so naturally attempt to account for the testimonies of antiquity to that era. Nor does he announce it, as if communicating something that had hitherto been unknown, but with another design altogether, he

1 Εἰ γὰρ ἔδει ἀναφανδὸν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ κηρύττεσθαι τοὔνομα αὐτοῦ, δι' ἐκείνου ἂν ἐρρέθη τοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν ἑωρακότος· οὐδὲ γὰρ πρὸ πολλοῦ χρόνου ἑωράθη, ἀλλὰ σχεδὸν ἐπὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας γενεᾶς, πρὸς τῷ τέλει τῆς Δομετιανοῦ ἀρχῆς.

2 Μαρτυρούντων αὐτῶν ἐκείνων τῶν κατ' ὄψιν τὸν Ἰωάννην ἑωρακότων.

introduces it as a thing then generally known and acknowledged. This is evident from the circumstance of his contenting himself with only a brief indication, and his being quite silent regarding the persecution of Domitian, and the apostle's exile to Patmos, the occasion which gave rise to the composition of the Apocalypse in the existing circumstances of the period—confident that his first readers would readily supply all this themselves.

Clement of Alexandria (in the work Quis dives § 42, and in Eusebius III. 23) says: "For since he (John) after the death of the tyrant returned to Ephesus from the isle Patmos,"[1] &c. The manner in which he speaks of the matter shews that there is implied a generally known tradition: the tyrant, the Roman emperor of the first century, Domitian, who, as is well known, pre-eminently deserves that name. It cannot be alleged that Clemens spoke of the tyrant, and not of Domitian, because he was ignorant of the name. He would in that case have chosen a general designation, not such an one as pre-supposes that he had in view a definite person.

Origen on Matth. xx. 22, 23, says: "But the sons of Zebedee have drunk the cup and been baptized with the baptism, since Herod killed James the brother of John with the sword; and the king of the Romans, as tradition testifies, condemned the witnessing John on account of the word of truth to the isle Patmos. But John himself instructs us regarding his martyrdom, not saying indeed who had adjudged him to it, yet declaring in the Apocalypse as follows: 'I, John, your brother and companion in tribulation,' &c., and seems to have beheld the Revelation on the island."[2] Here the king of the Romans forms the contrast to Herod the king of the Jews. Origen is silent respecting the name, because he was generally known, and the blank was easily supplied from the tradition, to which he refers. That the omission of the name is not, with Lücke p. 410, to be accounted for

1 Επειδὴ γὰρ τοῦ τυράννου τελευτήσαντος ἀπὸ τῆς Πάτμου τῆς νήσου μετῆλθεν εἰς τὴν Ἔφεσον.

2 Πεπώκασι δὲ τὸ ποτήριον καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα ἐβαπτίσθησαν οἱ τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου υἱοί, ἐπεὶπερ Ἡρώδης μὲν ἀπέκτεινεν Ἰάκωβον τὸν Ἰωάννου μαχαίρᾳ: ὁ δὲ Ρωμαίων βασιλεὺς, ὡς ἡ παράδοσις διδάσκει, κατεδίκασε τὸν Ιωάννην μαρτυροῦντα διὰ τὸν τῆς ἀληθείας λόγον εἰς Πάτμον τὴν νῆσον· διδασκει δε περι του, μαρτυριου εαυτου Ιωάννης, μὴ λέγων τίς αὐτὸν κατεδίκασε, φάσκων ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει ταῦτα· ἐγὼ Ἰωαννης ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν καὶ συγκοινωνὸς ἐν τῇ θλίψει κ.τ.λ., καὶ ἔοικε τὴν ἀπο-κάλυψιν ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τεθεωρηκέναι.

by his not knowing it, is evident from the analogy in Clemens, where more definitely, though still without the application of any proper name, the term "tyrant" is used; it is evident also, from the analogy in Eusebius III. 20, where "the isle" is the well-known traditional island Patmos; and, finally, from a comparison of the other preservers of the tradition, in particular Irenæus, who expressly names Domitian. Had Origen not been well assured regarding the name connected with the tradition—for which not the semblance of a reason can be given, and which is a mere refuge invented for the occasion—he would not have pointed so unconditionally to tradition, without at least intimating that he ascribed to it only a partial credibility.

The assertion, proceeding only from interested considerations, that what the ancients knew of John's exile to Patmos was inferred simply from the statement in ch. i. 9, is contradicted by Origen as distinctly as he well could. He remarks expressly, that he derived the fact of John's banishment to Patmos primarily from a substantial tradition, of whose credibility he, the critic, suggests no doubt. He introduces the testimony of John himself only as a confirmation, and remarks that it is less complete than the tradition, since the latter alone, besides what was common to the tradition and the Apocalypse, mentions who condemned the apostle. The tradition could not simply have been drawn by Origen from Irenæus. For, he refers to this far more than is to be found in the merely indicative statement of Irenæus, who says nothing, indeed, of the condemnation of John and his banishment to Patmos. We have no right, with Lücke, to lay the emphasis on, "he *appears* to have seen the Apocalypse on the island," and thence conclude, that the composition of the Apocalypse was only regarded by Origen as having probably taken place in Patmos. It is only a modest expression, which refers not so much to the execution of the particular work, as to human knowledge in general, according to the adage, *αἰτίην δὲ ἀτρεκέα μὲν ἴσασι μοῦνοι θεοὶ, ἐοικυῖαν δὲ καὶ ἀνθρωποι* (the certain cause is known only to the gods, and the probable to men). More cannot justly be attributed to the "he appears," since the tradition, to which Origen refers, on the part of its other vouchers connects the composition of the Apocalypse with the banishment to Patmos as an undoubted fact.

Eusebius, in B. III. ch. xviii. of his Church History, says, "Under him (Domitian) tradition relates, that the apostle and evangelist John, who was still alive, on account of his testimony for the divine word, was condemned to reside in the isle Patmos.[1] In B. III. ch. xx.: "Then also that the apostle John returned from his banishment on the island, and took up his dwelling again at Ephesus, the tradition of our older men has delivered to us."[2] Again, in B. III. ch. xxiii., "John governed there (in Asia) the churches, after his return from exile on the island, subsequent to the death of Domitian."[3] Also in the Chronicon under the fourteenth year of Domitian, "The apostle John, the theologian, he banished to the isle Patmos, where he saw the Apocalypse, as Irenæus says."

Eusebius is quite consistent with himself in the several passages, and always speaks with the same confidence (comp. besides Demonstr. III. 5). When in the Chronicon he refers to Irenæus as a sure voucher, it is so far of importance as it shews him to have had no suspicion that that Father had formed it by merely combining notices together. But it does not at all prove that Irenæus was the *only* source of the tradition to Eusebius. The contrary is manifest from the circumstance, that what Eusebius gives as the testimony of tradition, contains more than what is stated by Irenæus, and also, because in one of the passages he refers to *several* depositaries of the tradition. Never once does Eusebius point, by so much as a single syllable, to any other view regarding the author of John's exile, and the time of the composition of the Apocalypse. So that there must then in this respect have been perfect unanimity in the church. Finally, under the name of Victorinus of Petabio, who suffered martyrdom under Diocletian in the year 303, we have a writing on the Apocalypse, which is printed in the third volume of the Bibl. Patr. Lugd., and

1 Ἐν τούτῳ κατέχει λόγος τὸν ἀπόστολον καὶ εὐαγγελιστὴν Ἰωάννην ἔτι τῷ βίῳ ἐνδιατρίβοντα, τῆς εἰς τὸν θεῖον λόγον ἕνεκεν μαρτυρίας, Πάτμον οἰκεῖν καταδικασθῆναι τὴν νῆσον. See in reference to the κατέχει λόγος, which by no means marks an unauthorised, loose report, but commonly tradition, Rothe's Aufange der Christ. Kirche, p. 359.

2 Τότε δὴ οὖν καὶ τὸν ἀπόστολον Ἰωάννην ἀπὸ τῆς κατὰ τὴν νῆσον φογῆς τὴν ἐπὶ τῆς Ἐφέσου διατριβὴν ἀπειληφέναι ὁ τῶν παρ' ἡμίν ἀρχαίων παραδίδωσι λόγος.

3 Ἰωάννης τὰς αὐτόθι διεῖπεν ἐκκλησίας ἀπὸ τῆς κατὰ τὴν νῆσον μετὰ τὴν Δομετιανοῦ τελευτὴν ἐπανελθὼν φογῆς

which as to its substance is undoubtedly genuine, for it bears too exactly the character of the style which Jerome ascribes to Victorinus (see the collection of his expressions in the Bibl. Patr., and other reasons for its substantial genuineness, may be seen in Lücke, p. 494). But in this work the composition of the Apocalypse under Domitian, during the exile in Patmos, is spoken of as a matter of undoubted certainty.[1]

These are all the testimonies on the time of the composition of the Apocalypse belonging to the age of living tradition. They declare with perfect unanimity that John was banished by Domitian to Patmos, and there wrote the Apocalypse. Variations begin only to appear in the age of theology and learning. Epiphanius is the first, who puts forth another view. But even there the tradition still has such sway, that all persons of any critical acumen, all who know how to distinguish between historically accredited facts and conjectures and combinations, declare themselves on its side. At the head of these is Jerome, who did not reckon it worth while even to notice the existence of a different account, which must therefore be held to be every way improbable.[2] The matter stands precisely similar with the question regarding the genuineness.

For the more correct appreciation of the other and differing accounts we submit the following remarks.

1. It is only in writers of inferior rank that these accounts are to be found. Epiphanius, who is the first in point of time, is also by far the most important. But the judgment which Vitringa expressed regarding him, "that he was an extremely incredulous person, and in the mention of traditions or sayings of the ancients much less exact than he seems to be," is now gene-

1 The main passage is at p. 419: Oportet te iterum prophetare, inquit, populis et linguis: hoc est, quoniam quando hoc vidit Johannes, erat in insula Patmos, in metallum damnatus a Domitiano Cæsare. Ibi ergo vidit Apocalypsin: et cum senior jam putaret, se per passionem accepturum receptionem, interfecto Domitiano omnia judicia ejus soluta sunt, et Joannes de metallo dimissus sic postea tradidit hanc eandem quam acceperat a Domino Apocalypsin, hoc est, oportet te iterum prophetare. See also p. 420.

2 *E. g.* de viris illust. 9: Johannes quarto decimo anno secundam post Neronem persecutionem movente Domitiano in Patmos insulam relegatus scripsit Apocalypsin. Also ad Jovin ii. 14, and in the Chronicon. The ancient and right account is found also in Sophronius (about 629), in the life of John, and in Theophylact's Commentary on the four Gospels: Τεσσαρεσκαιδεκάτῳ ἔτει, δεύτερον μετὰ Νέρωνα διωγμὸν κινοῦντος Δομετιανοῦ εἰς Πάτμον νῆσον περιορισθεὶς συνέταξεν ἀποκάλυψιν, &c.

rally received. To pitch him against Irenæus, and treat with discredit the testimony of the latter, on the ground of what he has said, would betray a palpable want of critical acumen.[1] The late Syriac translator and Pseudodorotheus carry still less weight. And Theophylact furnishes a test for the measurement of his sagacity, in announcing, instead of the Apocalypse, that the Gospel was composed at Patmos, without probably a single authority to support the statement.[2]

2. None of those who deviate from the tradition venture to refer to it, while this is quite common with those who place the exile of John to the writing of the Apocalypse under Domitian.

3. "Only those (remarks Lücke) who place the exile under Domitian, indicate the continuance in a definite way." All the others speak in a vague manner, and do not venture to go into more exact specifications: precisely as we should have expected, on the supposition of the one class resting on historical tradition, and the other following uncertain conjectures.

4. The deviators are quite at variance among themselves, while the statement which places the composition under Domitian has the fixed impress, that is the mark of truth. The Syriac translation makes the exile of John and the composition of the Apocalypse to have taken place under Nero, Epiphanius under Claudius, and according to Pseudodorotheus he was banished to Patmos by Trajan.

5. The deviators shew also by their vacillation and wavering

1 Vitringa, however, does him an injustice, when, following Huetius, he would discover a confusion of such a nature (in one important passage, adv. haer. T. i. p. 434, also in another, p. 456) as would entirely destroy his title to be heard. Vitringa makes him say there, that John was already upwards of ninety years old when he returned from the island under Claudius. In that case, Epiphanius had preserved unchanged the age which John had attained at the time when, according to the tradition, he returned from the island. Epiphanius relates that John "composed his Gospel at a great age, after the ninetieth year of his life, after his return from Patmos, which took place under the emperor Claudius." But Lampe had already shewn, on John vol. i. p. 61, that Epiphanius meant to say that John was "ninety years old and upwards when, after his return from Patmos, and a considerable period more which he spent in Asia, he composed his Gospel." By expressing himself, however, in so careless and loose a manner, Epiphanius has certainly laid himself open to misunderstanding.

2 P. 55: Διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου εὐαγγελίου, ὃ καὶ συνέγραψεν ἐν Πάτμῳ τῇ νήσῳ ἐξόριστος διατελῶν, μετὰ τριακονταδύο ἔτη τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀναλήψεως. The deviation from the tradition here attaches merely to the number. Is this to be regarded as quite certain?

that they have no firm ground beneath their feet. Pseudodorotheus, after he has placed the banishment of John to Patmos under Trajan, adds, "But others say, he was banished to Patmos, not under Trajan, but under Domitian, the son of Vespasian."[1] Arethas, who at ch. vii. 1—8 places the composition of the Apocalypse before the Jewish war, at ch. i. 6, makes it to have been written under Domitian.

6. We can with tolerable certainty discover the extraneous grounds, which have given rise to these departures from the historical tradition, and through which they lose all their importance. They have no higher origin than the opinions of our modern critics, who on the ground of the first plausible conjecture and discovery on the internal field, disregard and tread under foot the weightiest and most solid testimonies. Epiphanias ranks in the same line with Züllig.

It cannot but appear strange, that all those who depart from the tradition, amid their other diversities agree in this, that they place the composition of the Revelation before the era of Jerusalem's overthrow. That what impelled them to this was the belief of certain passages in Revelation having respect to the Jewish catastrophe, seems probable alone from the analogy of later critics and expositors, who from Grotius downwards have been chiefly influenced by this consideration to disallow the composition of the Apocalypse under Domitian. But it is raised to certainty by expressions of Andreas and Arethas, who in reference to certain passages expressly affirm that they were understood by some of the Jewish war, who consequently could not do otherwise than transfer the composition of the book to a time previous to that war.[2] But in proportion as the exposition of the Apocalypse was then in a state of infancy, the less consideration can justly be attributed to what has sprung from such a ground.

Why the Emperor Claudius should have been fixed on may be

1 Before Theophylact on John: Ὑπὸ δὲ Τραϊανοῦ βασιλέως ἐξωρίσθη ἐν τῇ νήσῳ Πάτμῳ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου. . . Εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ λέγουσι, μὴ ἐπὶ Τραϊανοῦ αὐτὸν ἐξωρισθῆναι ἐν Πάτμῳ, ἀλλὰ ἐπὶ Δομετιανοῦ, υἱοῦ Οὐεσπασιανοῦ.

2 Andreas says on ch. vi. 12: Καὶ εἶδον ὅτε ἤνοιξε τὴν σφραγῖδα τὴν ἕκτην, καὶ σεισμὸς μέγας ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ ἥλιος ἐγένετο μέλας ὡς σάκκος κ. τ. λ. Καὶ ταῦτά τινες εἰς τὴν ἐπὶ Οὐεσπασιανοῦ πολιορκίαν ἐξέλαβον ἅπαντα τῶν εἰρημένων ἕκαστον προπολογήσαντες. Also on ch. vii. 1: Καὶ ταῦτά τισιν ὑπὸ Ρωμαίων πάλαι τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις γεγενῆσθαι ἐξείληπται.

gathered from those who have latterly contended for the composition under his reign. Grotius, Hammond, and others derive their chief argument in favour of Claudius from Acts xviii. 2, and the well-known passage of Suetonius (Claud. c. 25), which speak of the expulsion of the Jews, and this is supposed to have involved also John's banishment to Patmos. Another argument may still be found in the original passage Matt. xxiv. 7, "And there shall be famines and pestilences in various places," on which Rev. vi. 5—8 rests; for this has often been referred to the times of Claudius, in whose reign a famine four times broke out and a pestilence twice—comp. Acts xi. 28, the comm. on Sueton. c. 18, Schott Comment. in Sermones de reditu, p. 27.

It was the more natural to think of Nero, when one once abandoned the ground of testimony and gave way to conjectures, since, having been the first to begin the work of persecution against Christians, and the person under whom the most distinguished of the apostles, Peter and Paul, suffered martyrdom, he was regarded in ancient times as distinctively the persecutor. Tertullian already makes John, not indeed banished by Nero to Patmos, yet put by him into a barrel of boiling oil.[1]

We are not, however, to suppose that with the result we have now attained, the inquiry respecting the composition of the Apocalypse is to be regarded as closed. External testimonies alone cannot decide the matter. It is conceivable, that what was originally conjecture, may have clothed itself in the garb of tradition, and under this form deceived even the most honest inquirers. But we must put the matter in its fair and correct position—that we have no longer to speak of two equally accredited views of antiquity; that we must recognise upon the one side a well-supported tradition, and on the other an uncertain conjecture; that we must proceed to the investigation of the internal grounds with the consciousness of having already at the outset won a firm position, from which we should not suffer ourselves to be driven by any uncertain conjectures, but only by the most conclusive arguments. But the more careful examination of the internal grounds, far from invalidating the external testimonies, rather yields the result,

[1] So at least Jerome already, adv. Jovin. c. i. c. 14, understood his expression, de præscr. c. 36. Comp. Lampe on John Prolog. i. c. 4, § 3.

that the Book could have been composed at no other time than during the reign of Domitian.

I. Let us first bring into view the condition of the churches in Lesser Asia, as that appears in the seven epistles.

Dr Lücke himself is obliged to admit, p. 243, that the Revelation supposes a condition of the churches, which, in contradistinction from the earlier one of Paul's time, may be designated the age of John. First of all, the seven epistles presuppose a time, when that word of the Lord, "But when the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept," and that word, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold," had already passed into fulfilment. The blessed period of the first love is past, even there too, where it still relatively stood fast; zeal has relaxed and corruption make great inroads; we feel ourselves everywhere transferred to the later times, "in which a grievous corruption, that not suddenly but by gradual advances had sprung up, and acquired new strength as it proceeded, had already befallen those churches."

In Ephesus the love which Paul, in ch. iii. 18 of his epistle, had besought for the Ephesians, has become cooled. "But I have somewhat against thee, that thou hast left thy first love," (Rev. ii. 4.) Already it is a time, when that which still remained is in danger of perishing. "Remember from whence thou hast fallen (it is said in ver. 5), and repent and do the first works; else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." Paul, in his farewell discourse to the church at Ephesus, Acts xx., still makes no mention of any blemishes among them, but only warns them against the snares of the threatening foe. The Epistle to the Ephesians, written by Paul (according to Wieseler in his Chronol. of the Apost. age, p. 455) during the period of his first two years' imprisonment at Rome, or in the year 61 or 62 (according to Harless about the year 62), everywhere conveys the impression of fresh life, of a first love. The apostle begins at the very outset with an expression of thanksgiving to God for all the rich spiritual gifts which he had conferred on that church. He lauds in particular the *love* of the Ephesians, their brotherly love, which has its source and foundation in the love of God, ch. i. 15, 16, "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all

the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."

The church of Sardis appears in a still sadder condition. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead"—is the word to her, iii. 1—your light has already well-nigh become extinct.

Laodicea had become lukewarm; wretched and miserable, poor, and blind, and naked. The condition of the Laodicean church in Paul's time is partly to be estimated by that of the Ephesian, according to Col. iv. 16, partly and more particularly by that of the church of Colosse; comp. Col. ii. 1, iv. 13, 15, 16. The Epistle to the Colossians was written about the same time with that to the Ephesians (see Wieseler), and not long before the close of Paul's life, when suffering imprisonment at Rome. There, just as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, he gives thanks for what he had heard of their faith and love: "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and your love to all the saints," (Col. i. 3, 4.) According to ch. ii. 5, the apostle is with them in spirit rejoicing and beholding their order and their faith in Christ.

Dr Lücke thinks, p. 413, that the change in question can be explained, though a period of only ten years had intervened. But even this short space is not secured. The date of the Apocalypse is supposed by him to have been separated from that of the Epistles to Ephesus and Colosse by a period of somewhere about six years. And then it is clear as day, that even a space of ten years could not account for so radical a change. It bespeaks a change of persons, the arrival of a new generation: comp. Judg. ii. 7, according to which the people served the Lord so long as Joshua and the elders lived, who had seen the mighty works of the Lord, which he had done for Israel. In regard, especially, to what concerns the Laodiceans it will not do merely to say: Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis. It were indeed a source of despair, if such a change on the part of established Christians could be explained from a change of times, and, God be thanked, is without an example in the history of the Christian church. The world can certainly become demoralized in a short time, but Christians retain their anointing. And then in the decennium

immediately following the composition of the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, no change of times can be pointed out, which should have brought such perils with it, endangering even the elect. It came only at the period, to which the church tradition assigns the composition of the Apocalypse, under the reign of Domitian. *There* all the premises are to be found, which are required to explain the facts. We have, in that case, an interval of more than thirty years. During that period the apostles had all, with the exception of John, gone to their rest, and so the boundary set by the apostle Paul in 2 Thess. ii. 6 had been crossed; gone, too, were the Christian fathers, who had seen the great deeds of the Lord, while a storm of persecution, such as the Christian church had not yet seen, passed over the less firmly established new generation. Hence, the Seer writes, according to ch. i. 9, to his companions in tribulation and in the patience of Jesus Christ. Then did the word of the Lord in Matth. xiii. 20, 21, find a mournful fulfilment: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he who heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and bye he is offended."

Farther, we find in the churches to which John wrote, the errors of those, whom he designates by the symbolical names of the Nicolaitans or Balaamites, deeply rooted and wide-spread. According to ch. ii. 21, the Lord had already given ample time to their operations: "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not." How strong the pressure of the Nicolaitans was upon the church at Ephesus, is manifest from its being mentioned as a matter of high desert, that they hated the deeds of these Nicolaitans. They must there have been already excluded from the church. For in apostolic times this was the form in which hatred manifested itself—comp. 1 Cor. v.—and it could not otherwise have been a fact of a public character, as it appears to have been. In the church at Pergamos the matter had not been brought to such an exclusion, a proof how strong the party there was. So also in the church at Thyatira. It must there have found its way to the directorship; as may be inferred from the Jesabel, the wife of the angel, the weaker half of the party in office.

The rise of the importance of this sect can only be explained in connection with the influence which heathenism had preserved in men's minds, by reason of persecution, as a similar temptation and inclination to apostacy to Judaism in consequence of *Jewish* persecution meets us in the epistle to the Hebrews. And among Israel also the heathenish tendencies were never stronger than in the times of severe oppression on the part of the world, before the conquest of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and under Antiochus Epiphanes. Pergamos, which was a chief seat of this heresy, is described as the throne of Satan, the main centre of the heathenish persecution. Antipas, the faithful witness, had there suffered martyrdom. The community had under the persecution maintained their faith, but they were not to come out of the conflict without wounds. In Thyatira, the second seat of the heresy, the promise given shews that the temptation to false doctrine sprung from a terrible pressure on the part of heathenism. "He that overcometh and keepeth my words to the end, to him will I give power over the nations . . . and I will give him the morning star (a glorious supremacy)." If the church internally resists the pressure of heathenism, does not allow itself to be drawn aside to heathenish errors, it shall also gain externally the victory over it. Therefore, the temptation had come in from "the power of the heathen." Whosoever withstands it, receives in turn "the power of the heathen." Then, for the rise of this heresy out of the heathen persecutions, there is the analogy of ch. xi. In consequence of the overflowing of the heathen the fore-court of the temple is there given up, such, namely, as had no deep root, they are overcome through the heathen persecutions, and are drawn over to the fellowship of those, who in their minds were heathenish.

Accordingly, the getting the victory over this error implies what could not have existed before the times of Domitian, when for the first time a severe persecution, and one that threatened the annihilation of the Christians, swept over the church, and especially did not exist in the reign of Galba, during which there was no proper persecution of the Christians.

In the epistles of Paul there still occurs no trace of such a gross and wide-spread falling away into the region of heathenism. The errors, with which Paul contends, were chiefly of Jewish

origin, as were also the troubles which then pressed upon the Christians. Hymeneus and Philetus, according to the second epistle of Paul to Timothy, written at the very close of the apostle's life, succeeded with their refined philosophical error in turning only a few from the faith—*ἀνατρέπουσι τὴν τινῶν πίστιν.* The farther spread of such errors was expected only in the coming future; v. 17, comp. Acts xx. 29, 30.

The proper kernel of our heresy meets us, for the first time, in the second epistle of Peter, which the apostle wrote, according to ch. i. 13, 14, when he had death in immediate prospect. To the name of the Nicolaitans here corresponds there the comparison with Balaam, in ch. ii. 15, 16. The errors appear there chiefly to belong to the future; although the liveliness of the description, and the circumstance that the errors are sometimes spoken of as present, show that the apostle had the first beginnings of the evil already before his eyes. The occasion of its rise is indicated in ch. iii. 4. Where, say the opposing party, is the promise of his coming? The desire for this must have been awakened by the violence of the persecution and the tribulations of the world. What the Christians had latterly to suffer under Nero was well fitted, particularly at Rome, to call forth the first workings of the evil, and especially to open the eyes of the apostle in respect to the magnitude in the future, when the persecution should increase and widen, of the danger that should thence threaten the church. We are conducted a step farther by the epistle of Jude. The errors, which in the second epistle of Peter appeared as still chiefly lying in the future, are here represented as already present. "The errors (says Heydenrich in his defence of the genuineness of the second epistle of Peter), which Peter had announced as ready to appear, were now in actual being, and strove to gain a footing in the church, with which Jude was more immediately connected. How appropriate that he should repeat, and call up to the recollection of his readers, what at an earlier period Peter had so impressively and profoundly uttered for their warning!" That what was future in Peter had now become present, was the proper motive to Jude for writing his epistle.[1]

[1] Decisive for the priority of the second epistle of Peter, as compared with that of Jude, is Jude v. 17, 18, comp. with 2 Pet. iii. 3. We have here also an important testimony for the genuineness of the second epistle of Peter. But see Heydenrich, p. 97, also 103.

But even in Jude the error is still by no means so far advanced and so fully disclosed to view, as in the Revelation. There also it is said only, that "certain men had crept in unawares." We see ourselves here, therefore, brought into a quite isolated region, the path to which only began to be indicated in the latest epistles of the New Testament.

II. Of great importance for determining the time of composition is the passage ch. i. 9, "I John, your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." From this passage various proofs may be derived in confirmation of the view that the Book must first have been composed under Domitian. First, the prophet designates himself as the companion of Christians in Lesser Asia, to whom he primarily wrote, in their tribulation, and indeed in such a tribulation as kindled the desire after the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the kingdom of glory. For, as the world then sought to lay the church at its feet, the church needed to have her faith quickened in regard to the coming glory, that she might be able to bring fully into exercise the patience of faith. The discourse here, therefore, must be of a Christian persecution in the proper sense, and one that was of a general nature. But such a persecution first happened under Domitian. That which took place in Nero's time was confined to Rome.

Then the Seer presents himself here to our view as one who had suffered exile on account of his fidelity to the Christian testimony. Such local deportations, beside punishments of a capital nature, there is good evidence for believing were inflicted during the persecution of Domitian. On the other hand, under Nero, history knows only of capital executions at Rome, and never once mentions anything like deportations from one place to another.

Finally, the Seer, John, was on the isle Patmos when he received the Apocalypse. But it was under Domitian that tradition affirms John to have been banished thither.

Now, every thing has been brought into requisition to dispose especially of the second and third of these points. Lücke, in his Introduction, p. 244, would fain have us to make no account of the passage in determining the period of the composition. For the exposition is doubtful regarding the exile to Patmos, and the

tradition of such an exile of John is not harmonious—problematical. We do not need to enter on the latter point here; as the subject has already been discussed in the preceding investigations. To remove the exile to Patmos from our text in an exegetical way, Lücke has certainly bestowed great pains in the treatise on the Revelation of John i. 1, 2, and 9, in the Studien und Kritiken for the year 36, p. 654, ss. But we cannot avoid feeling our suspicions awakened as to the results there obtained, when we see how the main object in view comes out in the inquiry, for example in the words p. 661: "If we have rightly interpreted the passage, ch. i. 9, the exegetical reason, at least, disappears for the tradition, that John was ever banished to Patmos as a martyr;" and a more careful examination only serves to prove this suspicion to be well grounded.

Lücke reasons thus: What may hinder us from determining thus the phraseology of the Apocalypse, that "the testimony of Jesus Christ," with "the word of God," may be understood partly, as in ch. xx. 4, and xii. 17, of the gospel generally, so far as it refers to the testimony of Jesus, partly in a more special sense, if a particular prophetical word of God is meant, which was to be given or communicated through Jesus? Ch. i. 9 stands too near to ch. i. 2, not to be interpreted pre-eminently by it. If there the special revelation of the future is meant, so also here. Patmos is the place selected by God himself, where John must receive that revelation. Dr Bleek confesses that he has arrived at the same view, in the Evangelienkritik, p. 192: "The nearness of the passage (ch. i. 2) renders it at least probable that we should explain in a corresponding manner ch. i. 9, as indicative of the design, on account of which the Seer had withdrawn himself to the isle of Patmos, viz. that he might there receive the divine revelation which he unfolds in his Book."

From the first we feel compelled to think unfavourably of this interpretation. The air of martyrdom swims all around us in the Book of Revelation. Just as it can be rightly understood and appreciated only by those who have experience of tribulations,[1] so

[1] Bengel says in his Gnomon on ch. i. 9: In tribulatione maxime hic liber fidelibus sapit. Asiatica ecclesia, praesertim a floridissimo Constantini tempore, minus magni aestimavit hunc librum. Vix vestigium reperias Apacalypseos a Constantinopolitanis doctoribus allegatae: ubi in Chrysostomi operibus citatur, hoc ipsum alieni trac-

it could only have been written by one who had himself drunk of the bitter cup of martyrdom, had himself felt the force of its temptations, and in experience had known the sweetness of that consolation which he stretches forth to others. The persecution on the part of the worldly power of heathendom is the starting-point of the whole; and that the author was himself affected by it is evident from the prevailing tone of sadness, and the wrestling character of faith:—comp. the "I wept much" in ch. v. 4, which pervades the whole Book. The Book becomes a riddle, whenever we lose sight of the truth that it was written by a martyr (as such John is already designated by Polycrates of Ephesus, in Euseb. v. 24); and we must proceed on this ground, even though ch. i. 9 did not exist. Such passages as ch. vii. 9—17 indispensably require this key. So only would a partaker of the tribulation of Jesus Christ administer consolation. We, therefore, cannot feel disposed to abandon a mode of explanation which is in such perfect harmony with the whole spirit of the Book, unless constrained to do so by the most urgent necessity.

But so far from this being the case, the interpretation which understands the passage of martyrdom is the only tenable one. For, never and nowhere do the expressions "the word of God," and "the testimony of Jesus Christ," of themselves mark a prophetical announcement. In ch. i. 2 they certainly have that import, but only in connection with what precedes, and without prejudice to their more general signification: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John, who (here also, as formerly in the gospel and the epistles[1]), testified of the word of God, and

tatus indicium est. Africana ecclesia, cruci magis obnoxia, semper hunc librum plurimi fecit.

[1] It is true, certainly, that ver. 2 does not directly refer to the Gospel of John, as many held formerly, but to the matter of the Revelation itself. But, on the other hand, one cannot deny the connection with John's gospel, in i. 14, xix. 35, and especially the conclusion, xxi. 24, as also with the first epistle of John ch. i. 1, ss., and iv. 14, without doing violence to that exegetical feeling, to which we must make our appeal, as there are no conclusive reasons here for establishing what will not be frankly conceded. This connection of the beginning of the Revelation, especially with the *close* of the gospel and the *beginning* of the epistle, presents itself clearly before us with the construction: Who also here, as in the gospel and the epistle testified of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and that in the form of an immediate vision. We have thus

the testimony of Jesus Christ that he saw." In the passage before us, however, no such restrictive clauses have preceded, nor is there to be found any such reason for the more general mode of expression, as occurs above, in the allusion to the gospel and the epistles; here, therefore, the discourse can only be of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus in general.

But were the phrase, "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," doubtful in themselves, they would still receive from the connection in two ways a more precise and definite import. First, by the preceding context: your companion in the tribulation and the patience of Jesus Christ; the words, "I was in the isle that is called Patmos," etc., representing more definitely the part which the Seer had in the tribulation and patience of Jesus Christ. Then, by the sojourn on the island. This was fitted for no other purpose than as a place of banishment. Not for the preaching of the gospel, to which several in earlier times referred the expression, "on account of the word of God," etc. For, the island, which, according to Pliny, H. N. iv. 12, was thirty thousand paces in circuit, was too insignificant to draw toward it the regard and labours of an apostle, or of any one occupying so high a place as to have intrusted to him the oversight of the churches in Asia. Nor had it any peculiar fitness as a place where the Revelation was to be received. This might as well have been imparted to the Seer in his own dwelling. The only circumstance, which, with any appearance of probability, might be alleged as a reason for the apostle undertaking a visit to Patmos, in order to receive the Revelation there, is the nearness of the sea—a circumstance which has actually been adduced by Züllig, in his Revelation of John Th. i. p. 233. One might point with that view to ch. xiii. 1, "And I stood upon the sand of the

also an explanation of the otherwise strange generalness of expression, the want of any direct reference to the prophetical matter. We must the less, too, think of refusing to acknowledge this connection of the Revelation with the gospel and epistle, as it goes hand in hand with other references in the Revelation to the gospel. Comp. for example ch. iii. 20, with the expression of the Lord in John xiv. 21, 23; ch. v. 5 with John xvi. 33; ch. v. 6 with John i. 29, 36; ch. vii. 16, with John vi. 35; ch. xi. 7 with John vii. 6, viii. 30; ch. xii. 9 with John xii. 31, 32; xix. 13, with the introduction to the gospel. The facts now mentioned are also in so far of importance as they evince the priority of the Gospel and the Epistle to the Revelation, and so forbid us transferring the composition of the Apocalypse to an early period. But as this argument is not of a palpable kind, we satisfy ourselves with merely indicating it.

sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea." But it were to overlook the power of the Spirit, if we should suppose, that the prophet must, or even could make a voyage, in order to have the sea within view. Daniel, when far in the interior of the solid land, saw the four winds striving on the great sea. It was also in the Spirit only that Daniel found himself on the river Ulai, in ch. viii. 2. In the Revelation we can the less think of any thing else, as the Seer had before him constant examples of the use of the sea as a symbol by the older men of God. Nor is there to be found a single case, in which a prophet undertook a journey to a distant place, that he might there receive a vision.

The argument from the manner of expression and the connection is still farther strengthened by a comparison of the passage, ch. xiii. 10, which implies, that at the time when the Book was composed, beside capital executions there were also banishments to different places on account of the faith of Christ—a passage, which entirely accords with the one before us in the sense we put on it. In regard also to the particular expressions, see the passages ch. vi. 9, "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held;" xi. 11, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony;" xx. 4, "Those that were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God;"—in all which unquestionably it is faithfulness in confessing Christ in the midst of sufferings, which is denoted by these expressions.

Finally, the reference of our passage to the martyrdom of John is still farther confirmed by comparing it with Matth. xx. 22, 23, Mark x. 38. There the Lord announced to James and John that they should drink of his cup and be baptized with his baptism. A literal fulfilment of this declaration is what, both from its own nature and from the example of James, as well as the analogous case of Peter, we naturally expect to find. At the same time, we are not to overlook the circumstance, that in respect to John it was tempered by another announcement in John xxi. 20—22, according to which a martyrdom in the proper sense, as involving the loss of life for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, does not come into view. The exile to Patmos is the only event in which the fulfilment can be sought. This was recog-

nized already by Origen in Matth. Opp. iii. p. 719. To the like effect Jerome, in his commentary on the passage in Matthew; who, besides, refers to the report of John having been put into a barrel of boiling oil,—a report which had its rise in the feeling, as if the banishment to Patmos did not seem sufficient to fulfil the word of Christ. For the same reason, Victorinus of Petabio aggravates the exile in Patmos, by describing it as a banishment to the works in the mountains, and Theophylact (on the same passage) still makes John, after the exile, be sent back to Patmos by Trajan.

Exception has been taken against the reference of the passage to the exile of John, because only the greater culprits were doomed to this punishment; criminals of an ordinary kind were appointed instead to work in the mountains. But it is easy to shew, that the fact on which this argument is based does not rest on a solid foundation.[1] There is at any rate no want of proof that this punishment was especially suspended over those who were accused of misdemeanour against the state religion of Rome.[2]

. III. The persecution of the Christians, which proceeded from the supreme magistrate himself, from the Roman state and its rulers as such—this forms the historical starting-point of the Revelation. Such a persecution, being intended to repel the invasion which the new religion made upon the state's sovereignty, its pretended divinity, implied that the conflict between the deified world-power, and the worship of the true God and his Son, had already begun. The beast, the world-power, has, according to

1 That the punishment was applied even to common criminals is certain alone from Juvenal i. 73: Aude aliquid brevibus Gyaris et carcere dignum, si vis esse aliquid: probitas laudatur et alget. Comp. x. 169. According to Suetonius, Tit. c. 8, the delatores of Titus were banished in asperimas insularum. What Pliny says in the Panegyr. c. 34 of the conduct of Trajan towards the delatores, we shall give at length; as it is well fitted to supply us with an exact copy of the situation of the Seer: Congesti sunt in navigia raptim conquisita ac tempestatibus dediti. Abirent fugerentque vastatas delationibus terras, ac si quem fluctus ac procellae scopulis reservassent, hic nuda saxa et inhospitale litus incoleret, ageret duram et anxiam vitam. With this let the history of Flaccus, in Philo, p. 987, A., be compared: Μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἀφαίρεσιν τῆς οὐσίας κατέγνωστο αὐτοῦ φυγῆ, καὶ ἐξ ἁπάσης μὲν λαύνετο τῆς ἠπείρου, τόδ' ἐστὶ μεῖζον καὶ ἄμεινον τμῆμα τῆς οἰκουμένης, ἐξ ἁπάσης δὲ νήσου τῶν εὐδαιμόνων.

2 Lampe, in his Comm. on the Gospel of John i. 65: Religionis ab idololatria Romana abhorrentis professioni exilium pro poena decrevit Marcus imperator: Modestinus Juris consultus lege xxx. digest. de poenis: Si quis aliquid fecerit, quo leves hominum animi superstitione numinis terrentur: divus Marcus hujusmodi homines in insulam relegare rescripsit.

ch. xiii. 1 (comp. xvii. 3), upon its heads the name of blasphemy. Its adherents, according to ch. xiii. 4 (comp. xviii. 8), ask in a confident and insulting tone, Who is like the beast? It opens its mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven (xiii. 6). According to xiii. 8, it is worshipped by its adherents as a polemical demonstration against the Lamb. According also to xiii. 12, the false prophet directs to this worship, and according to ver. 15 he has power to compass the death of those who do not worship the image of the beast.

We have here an important proof that the Revelation could not be composed before Domitian's time. "Domitian," says Reimarus, on Dio Cassius, p. 1112, "was the first, Caligula perhaps excepted, who among the Romans laid claim to the name of God, and therefore nearly the whole odium connected with that ought to rest upon him." Certain approaches, indeed, to this claim are to be met with in the earlier Cæsars, in particular in Augustus. But in those cases it was the flattery of others which prompted what was done, and the emperor himself rather exercised a restraining influence.[1] But here the emperor took the initiative, and the claim was so extravagantly urged, that scarcely any thing of a similar kind is to be met with among the later emperors, and on this very account Domitian is quite notorious in antiquity. Philostratus, in the life of Apollonius, B. viii. c. 4, p. 324, makes Apollonius defy the claim of Domitian, "who would have himself regarded as the god of all men." According to Suetonius, he began his letters thus, "Our Lord and God commands that it should be done so and so;" and formally decreed that no one

1 Spanheim, de usu numismatum dissert. III. f. i. p. 141: "No one will be surprised that the fawning and idolatrous Greeks should have worshipped with divine honours and titles the emperors themselves, as supreme lords of the world, or a kind of present Deity; and not such merely as had died, but those also who were still alive. Respecting Augustus, indeed, what is recorded by Tranquillus is well known: "Templa, quamvis sciret etiam Proconsulibus decerni solere, in nulla tamen provincia, nisi communi suo Romaeque nomine receipt: nam in urbe quidem pertinacissime abstinuit" (in Augusto, c. 52). Tacitus, however, reports the matter a little differently, when he mentions how persons of a sober cast of mind reflected against Augustus, that nothing peculiar in divine honour was left to the gods, since he wished himself to be worshipped at temples and statues by flamens and priests. This is confirmed also by Victor Schotti, and Horace says in reference to it: Praesenti tibi maturos largimur honores, jurandasque tuas per nomen ponimus aras." Suetonius also states, beside what is quoted above by Spanheim: Atque etiam argenteas statuas olim sibi positas conflavit omnes, exque iis aureas cortinas Apollini dedicavit.

should address him otherwise either in writing or by word of mouth.[1] According to Dio Cassius, Nerva caused the gold and silver images of Domitian, which were very numerous, to be melted.[2] Pliny says, that he regarded any slight to his gladiators as an act of impiety toward his divinity.[3] He states, that Trajan was content with the place next to the gods, but that Domitian put himself on a footing of equality with them; nay, raised himself above them, and as if he alone almost had any claim to godhead, chose for his statues the most hallowed sites in the temple, and caused entire hosts of victims to be offered to himself.[4] In the downfal of Domitian Pliny saw an irony in real life on his pretended divinity.[5]

Hence, it is self-evident that under Domitian Christianity had to enter on a struggle of life or death with the imperial power, which always claimed, even in the hands of its most discreet possessors, more than Christians could yield. A sharp collision was now, therefore, inevitable. It is true, we cannot produce distinct historical statements to the effect that Domitian urged his impious claim precisely against the servants of God and his Son, and considered the honour given to these as a robbery of that due

1 Sueton. Domit. c. 13: Pari arrogantia, cum procuratorum suorum nomine formalem dictaret epistolam, sic cœpit: Dominus et Deus noster hic fieri juber. Unde institutum posthac, ut ne scripto quidem ac sermone cujusquam appellaretur aliter.

2 Dio Cassius Nerva c. 1.: Μίσει δὲ Δομετιανοῦ αἱ εἰκόνες αὐτοῦ πολλαὶ μὲν ἀργυραῖ, πολλαὶ δὲ καὶ χρυσαῖ οὖσαι συνεχωνεύθησαν· καὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν μεγάλα χρήματα συνελέγη.

3 Plinius Panegyr. c. 33: Demens ille verique honoris ignarus, qui crimina magistatis in arena colligebat, ac se despici et contemni, nisi etiam gladiatores ejus veneraremur, sibi maledici in illis, suam divinitatem, suum numen violari interpretabatur, cum se idem quod deos, idem gladiatores quod se putaret.

4 Panegyr. c. 52: Tu delubra nonnisi adoraturus intras, tibi maximus honor excubare pro templis, cum vice custodis aut satellitis statuae tuae ponuntur in vestibulis templorum, at non in ipsis, postibusque praetexi (apponi) . . . . At paulo ante aditus omnes, omnes gradus totaque area, hinc auro, hinc argento relucebat, seu potius relucebat, seu potius polluebatur, cum incesti Principis statuis permixta Deorum simulacra sorderent Simili reverentia, Caesar, non apud genium tuum bonitati tuae gratias agi, sed apud numen Jovis optimi max. pateris; illi debere nos quidquid tibi debeamus, illius quod bene facias muneris esse, qui te dedit. Ante quidem ingentes hostiarum greges per Capitolinum iter, magna sui parte velut intercepti, divertere via cogebantur, cum saevissimi domini atrocissma effigies, tanto victimarum cruore coleretur, quantum ipse humani sanguinis profundebat.

5 Ille tamen, quibus sibi parietibus et muris salutem suam tueri videbatur, dolum secum et insidias et ultorem scelerum deum inclusit. Dimovit perfregitque custodias

to himself. But this omission is easily explained from the decided aversion of heathen authors to Christianity, who could not but regard it as fatal to relate what would appear to give Christians the right side in the matter, and thereby awaken sympathy in their favour. Still, there are not wanting plain enough notices, which, when properly explained, perfectly supply the defect of particular accounts.

The chief passage here is that of Dio Cassius, B. lvii. p. 1112, Reim. : "In this same year Domitian put to death, beside many others, the consul Flavius Clemens, although he was his uncle, and had to wife Flavia Domitilla, who was also a relative of the emperor. Both were accused of impiety, for which also many others were condemned, having gone astray after the customs of the Jews. But Domitilla was only banished to Pandatereia."[1]

That Clemens was a Christian, there can be no doubt. The Christians were in the earlier periods of gospel history classed with the Jews, and as Reimarus remarks, "very few among the Romans at that time went over to Judaism proper, especially among the persons of note, but many to Christianity." So also Tillemont: "Situated as the Jews then were, it is quite improbable that a consul, who was uncle to the emperor, should have espoused their religion." Besides, the sister's daughter of Flavius Clemens is known to have been a distinguished Christian (the Flavia Domatilla in Eusebius, Ch. Hist. iii. 18,[2] and in Jerome's Chron.) and possibly it was to her that Flavius owed his first religious impressions. Finally, Suetonius designates the same Flavius as a man of "despicable inactivity."[3] This was a

Poena, augustosque per aditus et obstructos, non secus ac per apertas fores et invitantia limina prorupit; longeque tunc illi divinitas sua.

1 Καὶ τῷ αὐτῷ ἔτει ἄλλους τε πολλοὺς καὶ τὸν Φλάβιον Κλήμεντα ὑπατεύοντα καίπερ ἀνεψιὸν ὄντα, καὶ γυναῖκα καὶ αὐτὴν συγγενῆ ἑαυτοῦ Φλαβίαν Δομιτίλλαν ἔχοντα κατέσφαξεν ὁ Δομετιανός. Ἐπηνέχθη δὲ ἀμφοῖν ἔγκλημα ἀθεότητος, ὑφ' ἧς καὶ ἄλλοι ἐς τὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἤθη ἐξοκέλλοντες πολλοὶ κατεδικάσθησαν. Καὶ οἱ μὲν ἀπέθανον, οἱ δὲ τῶν γοῦν οὐσιῶν ἐστερήθησαν· ἡ δὲ Δομιτίλλα ὑπερωρίσθη μόνον εἰς Πανδατέρειαν.

2 Ἐν ἔτει πεντεκαιδακάτῳ Δομετιανοῦ Φλαβίαν Δομιτίλλαν, ἐξ ἀδελφῆς γεγονυῖαν Φλαβίου Κλήμεντος, ἑνὸς τῶν τηνικάδε ἐπὶ Ῥώμης ὑπάτων, τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν μαρτυρίας ἕνεκεν εἰς νῆσον Ποντίαν κατὰ τιμωρίαν δεδόσθαι. We must take care to distinguish between the two Flavias Domatillas, the one the wife, the other the niece of Clemens. Without sufficient reason Scaliger has identified the two, and would correct Eusebius from Dio.

3 Domit. c. 15: Flavium Clementum patruelem suum, contemptissimae inertiae cujus

reproach which was frequently cast upon the Christians, because they withdrew from the corrupt civil life as it existed in heathendom, and thought more of their citizenship in heaven than in the Roman commonwealth.[1] This reproach did not apply to the Jews.

How the accusation of "impiety" is to be understood, is clear from what immediately precedes, where we learn that a person who had been accused did homage to Domitian, and named him frequently Lord and God[2]—a title under which he had already been addressed by others. It may farther be understood from what is said at p. 1107: "So much, however, was conceded to him, that almost the whole world, as far as subject to his dominion, was filled with his images and statues, both in silver and gold;" and from all that has been said of Domitian's self-deification; since he would scarcely allow any other god to stand beside himself, and the *one* divinity which had a place in his heart was his own pretended one. To the same result we are conducted by the passage quoted from Suetonius. According to this author Clemens was put to death "on account of a very slender suspicion." From the connection this suspicion could only be that of resistance to authority. And the suspicion and the accusation of impiety are seen to harmonise, the moment we suppose that Clemens ventured to disavow the emperor as his lord and god, and do homage to his statues, on the ground of fidelity to his heavenly king.

That Domitian looked upon Christianity with a jealous eye, may also be inferred from what Eusebius has related in his Church History, iii. 19, 20, from Hegesippus, as to Domitian causing the relatives of Christ to be sent for to Rome, because he was afraid of the coming of Christ.

It is clear as day, then, that for all that respects the conflict of the world-power with the kingdom of Christ, we obtain an ex-

filios etiamnum parvulos successores palam destinaverat, et abolito priore nomine alterum Vespasianum appellari juserat, alterum Domitianum, repente ex tenuissima suspicione tantum non ipso ejus consulatu interemit.

1 Pitiscus on Sueton. l. c.: Contemptissimae inertiae cum hunc Flavium vocat noster, eo ipso Christianum fuisse demonstrat. Dehoc injuriae in Christianos titulo Tert. in apol. c. 42: Infructuosi in negotiis dicimur.

2 As Martial in like manner said to Domitian: Hoc satis est, ipsi caetera mando Deo. See Havercamp on Tertullian's Apol. p. 176.

cellent historical starting-point, when we understand the Apocalypse to have been composed under Domitian, while such is entirely wanting on any other hypothesis.

The Revelation supposes, that, at the period of its composition, the Antichristian action of the world-power was accompanied by the Antichristian operation of the world-wisdom; that this last had already taken up a decided opinion against Christianity, implying of course that it had now become a power in public life. In proof of this see ch. xiii. 11, ss., according to which the false prophet persuades to the worship of the beast, gives spirit to the image of the beast, and effects that those who would not worship the image should be killed. Here, again, we are left without any definite accounts, and for the reasons already mentioned. We find notices, however, which leave no reasonable doubt that under Domitian the pretensions of the Roman emperor against Christ obtained support in a species of false worldly wisdom, which condescended to garnish those pretensions, and to give them a dazzling appearance, more unquestionably from hatred to Christ, than from avaricious flattery. The most remarkable notice of the kind, and that which furnishes the key for understanding others of a less definite nature, occurs in Philostratus' life of Apollonius, B. vii. 4. After relating how Domitian persecuted the philosophers, he continues, "But some also were led to discourse in a manner that was serviceable to the delinquencies,"[1] tending to vindicate the emperor's misconduct by giving a scientific colour to his divine pretensions. He boasts of his hero, that he had kept free from any such delinquency, for, "having taken wisdom for his mistress, he was free from dependence on Domitian, . . fearing nothing in respect to himself, but moved with pity on account of what was fraught with destruction to others."[2] There were, therefore, philosophers who, by their discourses in respect to the emperor's claims, brought others into trouble; and who could these be but the Christians, the only persons that set themselves with determined energy against such claims? After considering this passage, one can scarcely doubt, when it is else-

1 Ἔνιοι δ' ἐς λόγους ἀπενεχθῆναι ξυμβούλους τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων.

2 Τὴν σοφίαν δέσποιναν πεποιημένος ἐλεύθερος ἦν τῆς Δομετιανοῦ φορᾶς, . . δεδιὼς μὲν οὐδὲν ἴδιον, ἃ δὲ ἑτέρους ἀπώλλυ ἐλεῶν.

where related how the Stoic Palfurius Sura under Domitian had acted the part of a very bitter delator, and was in consequence condemned after the emperor's death, that this philosopher pursued the vile business in his capacity as a philosopher, employing his philosophy and eloquence for the persecution of Christianity, and for garnishing the antichristian claims of the emperor.[1] Dio Cassius names, among many delators who were condemned to death under Nerva, another philosopher, Seras.[2] From all this what Pliny says of Nerva's measures against the delators, appears in a new light.

IV. The Revelation was composed at a time when there was an organized bloody persecution, which extended over all Christendom. Ch. xiii. 7 is alone sufficient to prove this, according to which the beast makes war with the saints and overcomes them; and power is given him over all tribes, and peoples, and tongues, and nations, Christians over the whole earth. It appears also from xiii. 8, according to which all, that dwell on the earth, worship the beast; ii. 13, which speaks of the martyr-crown being won far from the centre of the Roman state, and under the direction of the magistracy, acting as Satan's instrument (xiii. 3); vi. 9, where the prophet sees under the altar the souls of those, who had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they had; xvii. 6, where he sees the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus; xvi. 6, according to which they have shed the blood of saints and prophets; xviii. 20, in which God is said to avenge upon the new Babylon saints, and apostles, and prophets, while in ver. 24 the blood of saints and of prophets is declared to have been found in her. Finally, ch. xx. 4, where the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God re-

1 Schol. ad Juvenel. iv. 53. Palfurius Sura consularis in agone cum virgine Lacedemonia sub Nerone luctatus est. Post inde a Vespasiano senatu motus, transivit ad stoicam sectam, in qua cum praevaleret, et eloquentia et artis poeticae gloria, abusus familiaritate Domitiani, acerbissime partes delationis exercuit: quo interfecto senatu accusante damnatus est.

2 Lib. 68, c. 1: Πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ τῶν συκοφαντησάντων θάνατον κατεδικάσθησαν, ἐν οἷς καὶ Σέρας ἦν ὁ φιλόσοφος.

3 After having praised Nerva for his energetic measures against the delators, he continues: Id hoc magis arduum fuit, quod imperator Nerva, te filio, te successore dignissimus, perquam magna quaedam edicto Titi adstruxerat, nihilque reliquisse nisi tibi videbatur, qui tam multa excogitasti, ut si ante te nihil esset inventum.

vive again, and those who had not worshipped the beast, nor his image, nor had received his mark upon their forehead and their hand. No doubt, the future is in these passages represented as present, but only in so far as it was to be a continuation of the present. There is never found a trace of what for the time being existed only within local boundaries, appearing afterwards as a heavy tribulation or general persecution extending to the whole of Christendom. Comp. besides ch. vii. 14.

There is a onesidedness in the representation given of Christ. Throughout we see only the aspect he presents to the enemies of his kingdom, and indeed specially the heathen enemies; the Jews appear only as insignificant opponents, as tails of smoking firebrands, that were briefly despatched in the epistles. And this consideration, coupled with the longing desire that is manifested toward the coming of Christ, and the lively faith in respect to the nearness of his approach; all lead to the conviction, that a general conflict of heathenism and Christianity, a conflict of life and death, had already entered.

Now, that such a bloody persecution existed under Domitian, can certainly be proved, and nothing but the confusion of a Dodwell could deny it.[1] This is just what might have been expected from the relation in which Christianity stood to the claim of divinity put forth by Domitian, which he urged with unsparing rigour. "It was enough," says Suetonius, "that any word or deed against the majesty of the emperor was objected against any one;"[2] and as majesty is here meant, the mere confession of Christianity must have appeared as a capital offence against it. But we possess explicit testimonies even from heathen writers, although, for the reasons already mentioned, these are cautious and reserved in their words. In one of the passages formerly quoted, Dio Cassius says that Domitian put to death "many others" besides the Flavius Clemens, whose death itself inferred the martyrdom of many companions; for when the emperor con-

1 See against him, as maintaining in his Dissertatio de paucitate martyrum that the persecution under Domitian never proceeded so far as to inflict tortures, to say nothing of actual blood-shed, Pagi crit. i., p. 83, and Ruinart in his Praefatio in Acta Martyrum iii,

2 Domit. c. 12: Satis erat objici qualecunque factum dictumque adversus majestatem principis.

ducted himself in such a way toward his nearest relatives, how should he have spared others? According to the same author, Nerva punished many delators with death, who, we may be sure, only suffered themselves what they had brought upon others; he set free those who for high treason had been condemned, or were under investigation;[1] and forbade accusations respecting that crime and the Jewish manners to be any longer received. With that prohibition, another (Nerva c. ii.) against setting up gold or silver statues, went hand in hand; for the claim of divinity in Domitian, and the persecution of Christians, stood to each other in the relation of cause and effect. Philostratus, in the passage already quoted, complains, that under Domitian a certain class of philosophers had become to others the occasion of death. The notices of Christian authors lead to the same result. In the account of the martyrdom of St Ignatius, in Ruinart, p. 13, it is said, that he with difficulty escaped the earlier storms of the many persecutions that took place under Domitian[2] Eusebius, in his Chronicon, under the year 2112, reports on the authority of Brutius, that "very many Christians suffered martyrdom under Domitian." He relates in his Church History, iii. 19, 20, that Domitian caused the relatives of Christ to be fetched from Palestine to Rome.

Thus, therefore, we have an excellent historical starting-point in this respect for the composition of the Apocalypse, if we refer it to the time of Domitian. But none such can be found, if the period of composition is transferred to the reign of Galba. For, there was then no persecution of Christians, and the only bloody persecution conducted under public authority, which had previously occurred, that under Nero, had both been of short continuance, and did not pass beyond the limits of Rome—not to mention, that it had not been raised against Christians so directly "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," as is here supposed. The extension of this persecution beyond the limits of Rome, is in itself not probable. And the Christians, according

1 Nerva c. i.: Καὶ ὁ Νερούας τούς τε κρινομένους ἐπ' ἀσεβείᾳ αφῆκε καὶ τοὺς φεύγοντας κατήγαγε. The ἀσέβεια, impietas, is the crimen majestatis, quia imperatores paene pro diis colebantur, et Domitianus tantos gerebat spiritus, ut divino fastigio parem se putaret. Reimarus.

2 Τοὺς πάλαι χειμῶνας μόλις παραγαγὼν τῶν πολλῶν ἐπὶ Δομετιανοῦ διωγμῶν.

to the credible report of Tacitus,[1] were not punished primarily as Christians, but on the ground of having been the first to begin the burning of the city,[2] so also Eusebius in his Church History, ii. 25. The first person, who positively says, that the persecution of Nero spread beyond Rome, is Orosius, a late author, and one who is the less to be regarded, as Tertullian knows only of Rome.[3] In other things he merely copies Suetonius, and introduces but this one circumstance from his own hand.[4] If the reasons for and against the extension beyond the limits of Rome were otherwise equal, we should still feel constrained to decide for the latter, on the simple ground, that from Nero being the first persecutor of the Christians, it was quite natural in process of time to attribute to him more in this respect than originally and properly belonged to him.

Against this view of the Neronian persecution as a merely passing and local one, an argument might certainly be raised from the first epistle of Peter, if it were indeed the case, first that this epistle was written immediately after the outbreak of that persecution, and then that it proceeds on the supposition of a general persecution of the Christians. But both assumptions are untenable. That the epistle was written not *after*, but *before* the persecution of Nero, in which Peter won the crown of martyrdom, has been proved by Wieseler (p. 564, ss.). And the persecutions, which are discoursed of in the first epistle of Peter, and to exhort to stedfastness under which is one object of the epistle, are essentially different from those in the Revelation. What in the first epistle of Peter is only a subordinate aim, in the Apocalypse is all-predominant: the persecutions referred to in the former are only such as are inseparable from the existence of Christianity itself. No indication exists of a threatening martyrdom,

[1] Annal. xv. 44: Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos, et quaesitissimis pœnis affecit quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat.

[2] See on the connection of the burning and the Christian persecution, Wieseler Chronol. des Apost. Zeitalters, p. 543, ss.

[3] Adv. Gnost. c. 15: Vitas Cæsarum legimus; orientem fidem Romae primus Nero cruentavit. Apol. c. 5: Consulite commentarios vestros: illic reperietis primum Neronem in hanc sectam cum maxime Romae orientem, Cæsariano gladio ferocisse.

[4] Sueton. in Nero. c. 16, says: Afflicti supplicis Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novae et maleficae. Orosius, B. vii. c. 7, following him so far, that he derives the persecution from the burning, primus Romae Christianos supplicio et mortibus affecit, *ac per omnes provincias pari persecutione excruciari imperavit.*

none of persecution by the world-power as such, nor even any certain marks of occasional judicial persecutions. Christians are represented as suffering reproach among the heathen, being reviled as evil-doers, ch. ii. 12; they have much to suffer, especially in the way of calumny, ii. 23, iii. 9, 16, iv. 14. The strongest passage is ch. v. 8, 9, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." But this passage simply indicates, that the heathen mind was then beginning to become fully conscious of the antagonism that existed between it and Christianity, and the danger which thence threatened its views and feelings; it implies nothing in regard to persecutions of blood in the proper sense, nor to any interference on the part of the magistrate, nor to the supposed fact, that the heathen state had already taken the matter into its own hand.

V. The Revelation was written in the midst of persecutions, during which not only executions, but also banishments, took place. This is clear from ch. xiii. 10, "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." In this passage, as the comparison with Luke xxi. 24, Amos i. 6, Ps. lxviii. 19, &c., shews, it is not merely imprisonment, but also deportations and exiles that are meant, which is also confirmed by ch. i. 9, where the Seer describes himself as being in the isle Patmos "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." Nothing of this sort is reported concerning the Neronian persecution. All the sources, Tacitus and Suetonius at their head, make mention only of capital punishments, which were also the only appropriate ones for such a charge. On the other hand, in the persecution under Domitian, banishment, especially to desert islands, is often and expressly referred to. According to Dio Cassius the wife of Flavius Clemens was exiled to Pandatereia. According to him also, Nerva recalled those who had been banished.[1] And according to Euse-

[1] See Zonaras, p. 583, B.: Τοῖς ὑπ' ἐκείνου ἐξελαθεῖσι δόγματι ἐπανελθεῖν ἐφῆκε καὶ τὰς οὐσίας ἀπολαβεῖν.

bius, both in his history and his Chronicon, the sister's daughter of Flavius, Domatilla, was for her Christian confession banished to the island Pontia.

VI. Domitian, above almost every other, was a fit representative of the terrible bloody beast, full of names of blasphemy, and of the horrible woman drunk with the blood of saints and of the witnesses of Jesus—comp. ch. xiii. 17. What Pliny says of Domitian in his Panegyr. c. 18, not unfrequently reminds one of the Revelation, and suggests the thought, that to the author of the latter Domitian sat for the picture of the beast. He describes him as the "most savage monster," that sometimes gulped the blood of relatives, sometimes employed himself in slaughtering the most distinguished citizens, before whose gates fear and terror watched. He was himself of frightful aspect, pride on his forehead, fury in his eye, constantly seeking darkness and secrecy, and never coming out of his solitude, excepting to make solitude.[1] A similar description is given also by Tacitus in his Agricola. In ch. xliv. he mentions it as a great consolation in respect to Agricola's early death, that "he thus escaped that last period, in which Domitian no longer at intervals and during vacant periods, but constantly, and as with one stroke, made havoc of the state." How little the insipid Nero can in this respect be compared with Domitian, is manifest from what is said of both by Philostratus, B. vii. c. 4. Nero, says he, led the life of a player on the harp and flute, and for such a life little vigour was required. Quite otherwise with Domitian; "he was a man of great bodily strength, and despised the pleasures which music yields, and which tend to soften the mind; he found his enjoyment in the pains and lamentations of others, and thought that the king by night should put an end to all other works, but give a beginning to deeds of murder."

"He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints" (ch. xiii. 10). The view

1 Nec salutationes tuas fuga et vastitas sequitur, remoramur, resistimus ut in communi domo, quam nuper immanissima bellua plurimo terrore munierat. Cum velut quodam specu inclusa nunc propinquorum sanguinem lamberet, nunc se ad clarissimorum civium strages caedesque proferret. Observabantur foribus horror et minae et par metus admissis et exclusis. Ad hoc, ipse occursu quoque visuque terribilis, superbia in fronte, etc.

given in this passage pervades the Apocalypse. We see in it under the altar the souls of those who were slain for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus; we hear them crying with one voice, and saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" And as this cry is heard, we see how God does judge the blood of his servants that had been shed. It is worthy of remark, that even the antichristian heathen world had a suspicion of the greatness of the guilt which Domitian had incurred by his persecution of the Christians, and of the retribution to which he had in consequence exposed himself. A proof how vigorously the feeling had then been awakened respecting the retributive righteousness of God in Christendom! For only as a reverberation of the powerful movement that had arisen there can we account for what was then felt in the heathen world. It could not wholly withstand the strong impression that flowed in upon it, but against its own will and principles was drawn within the sweep of the movement. "The gods," says Philostratus, viii. 25, "drove Domitian from his dominion over men; for he had killed the consul Clemens, to whom he had given his own sister (?)"[1] "Especially through this deed," says Suetonius, "he hastened his own downfal;" and then proceeds to give a long series of pre-intimations that announced beforehand the coming catastrophe.[2]

Having thus obtained the result, that the Revelation was written under Domitian, it will not be difficult to determine more exactly the period to which it should be referred within this circle, even apart from the tradition, which, according to Irenæus, ascribes it to the closing period of Domitian's reign. Heathen writers (see, besides those already quoted, Juvenal Sut. iv. v. 153) agree in this, that the bloody persecution of the Christians, in the midst of which the Revelation was written, was soon followed by the death of Domitian. Accordingly, and in conformity also with the statement of Brutius in Eusebius, and in the Chronicon

1 Εώθουν δὲ θεοὶ Δομετιανὸν τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων προεδρίας· ἔτυχε μὲν γὰρ Κλήμεντα ἀπεκτονὼς, ἄνδρα ὕπατον ᾧ τὴν ἀδελφὴν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐδεδώκει.

2 Quo maxime facto maturavit sibi exitium. Continuis octo mensibus tot fulgura facta nuntiataque sunt, ut exclamaverit: feriat jam quem volet (hoc suo telo Jupiter, q. d. etiamsi me percutere voluerit, Beroaldus). Tactum de coel Capitolium templumque Flaviae gentis, etc.

Paschale, under the fourteenth year of Domitian, that many Christians suffered martyrdom during that year, the Revelation must have been composed shortly before the death of Domitian. There can be no doubt that it was only this event which put a stop to the persecution of the Christians, although Tertullian and Hegesippus maintain the contrary, and represent Domitian as himself putting a stop to all his persecuting measures. The mild treatment which Domitian gave to the relatives of Jesus, and which rests on good historical authority, furnished the occasion for this representation, as in Eusebius it appears only as a report attached to the latter. It looks from the first very unlike Domitian that he should have come to a better mind; and the closing of the persecution suits much better to Nerva, who is called by Martial soft and good-natured, and who endeavonred to rectify every thing that Domitian had put wrong. It was Nerva who, according to Dio Cassius, set all at liberty that had been accused of high treason, who recalled such as had been banished, and ordered that no farther accusations of the kind should be received. It was Nerva who, according to Pliny, adopted the most stringent measures against the delators. According also to Tacitus and Philostratus, it was the death of Domitian which first put an end to his fury. And not till the tyrant had gone did John effect his return from the isle Patmos to Ephesus, as we learn from Clemens of Alexandria, and Eusebius in his Church History (B. III. 20, 23).

That the Apocalypse could not have been written so early as the time of Galba, is evident from the absence of any, even the most cursory, reference to the fall of Jerusalem, as an event nigh at hand. Unquestionably, any reference to this event did not properly enter into the plan of the author; its starting-point is a frightful rise of the hostile power of heathenism, its theme the triumph of Christianity over heathendom. But since the fall of Jerusalem occupies so prominent a place in the prophecies of our Lord regarding the future development of His kingdom, which form in a manner the text on which John comments,—since, also, it was precisely in the time of Galba that the fate of Jerusalem was preparing for its accomplishment,—it would have been unnatural had the author of the Apocalypse made no reference whatever to it. We should the rather have expected him to do so,

when even in the epistles we see how constantly respect is had to the existing heathen oppression, which had then come forth into the foreground, but which did not exclude some incidental reference to the subordinate Jewish persecution. See what is intimated respecting the humiliations that were to overtake the Jewish persecutors in ch. iii. 9; where, however, not a single word occurs respecting the fall of Jerusalem, which could scarcely have been the case if that crushing catastrophe had still been future. Further, since the prophet applies the name of Jerusalem and of Zion to the church, it would have been very natural, had the outward Jerusalem and Zion still existed in their former dignity, to have given some indication that their pretensions were soon to be laid in the dust. That these names should have been simpliciter applied to the church, that the latter also should be represented, without the slightest explanation, as the temple (ch. xi. 1), is most easily explained, if there was but one thing to which the terms now could refer. To the same conclusion points also the analogy of Ezekiel, who received the vision of the new temple and the new city in the fourteenth year after the destruction of the old ones. See ch. xl. 1.

In unison with its place in the Canon, the Revelation must form the key-stone to the books of the New Testament, and be separated in particular from the epistles of Paul by a considerable space of time and by the epoch of Jerusalem's fall. This appears from the doctrine, which is clearly and distinctly unfolded in it, that the second coming of Christ and the resurrection were at a great distance from the present time; that in the middle lay a period of a thousand years; *before*, the overthrow of Rome by the ten kings, the conquest of these kings by Christ, and the destruction of the heathenish world-power; *afterward*, the revival of heathenism, its new conflict with the church, and the glorious victory of the latter. An easy transition to this manner of viewing things is to be found in 2 Pet. iii. 8, where the *possibility* is indicated of the Lord's coming being so long deferred, that it would be regarded in a human aspect as very distant. There is no room for an opposition with the earlier writers of the New Testament, as these plainly declare, that they did not know the time of the Lord's coming. But a decided advance is made in the knowledge, and an advance of such importance that it could

scarcely have been made so early as the period assigned by some for the composition of the Book. It seems to require a basis of new circumstances and relations, and in particular that the appearance of the Lord to execute judgment on Jerusalem should have already belonged to the past. So long as this event had not taken place, it must have been very difficult to determine what in our Lord's discourses referred to it, and what to the end of the world. The asseveration of our Lord, "Verily I say to you, this generation shall not pass away till all is fulfilled," in Matt. xxiv. 34, must have rendered doubtful the indication of a more distant future by the end of all things, until history had entered as an expositor—until the destruction of Jerusalem as an isolated fact, not connected with a general catastrophe for the world, had shown that there was not an absolute and final, but only a preparatory fulfilment to be looked for. It presented, so to speak, a microscopic view of the judgment, where everything was to be seen on a small scale, which at the actual end of the world was to appear in its proper greatness. Hence, all that our Lord in Matthew prophecies regarding his coming, refers immediately both to the destruction of Jerusalem, and to the end of the world, with all its manifold and recurring signs, preludes, preparations, and warnings; and it is a vain undertaking, which has been latterly attempted again by Dorner, to endeavour to distinguish mechanically and externally what should be referred to the one event and what to the other. There is a pervading reference, as we have said, to both events, the destruction of Jerusalem being contemplated as the nearer, and that also which was to be the exact image of the other, the final judgment of the world. But as to the period of the latter, no definite marks occur in our Lord's prediction. Till this historical commentary was given, the matter must needs have been allowed to hang in suspense, after the example of our Lord, and as appears to have been actually done by the apostles. It was only when such a commentary had been given that the ground was laid for imparting the new explanations, which are unfolded in the Apocalypse, just as of old when the seventy years of Jeremiah were on the point of expiring, Daniel came forth with his prophecy of the seventy weeks of years.

It is not necessary to do more than set opposite to these strong

external and internal grounds for the composition of the Apocalypse under Domitian, a reference to those passages in it, which are said imperatively to demand its composition before the destruction of Jerusalem. Züllig goes farthest in this direction, He says in Th. i. p. 137, "The Book bears on it, not in one place, but in many, nay in its whole structure, an undeniable proof of having been written before the fall of Jerusalem." Others of the same opinion speak in more moderate terms. According to Lücke, and those who have followed him without any particular inquiries of their own, ch. xi. bears testimony to the composition before the fall of Jerusalem, and ch. xvii. 10, 11 determines the period to be specially that of the reign of Galba. Bleek, in his Beiträgen, p. 81, thinks that it is quite plain Jerusalem must still have been standing from ch. xi., and probably also from ch. xx. 9, as compared with xxi. 10, ss. But these references can only impose upon such as are ignorant of the state which the exegesis of the Revelation has now attained. He who takes this properly into account, will in the first instance at least assume for his starting-point the period of Domitian, as that which has so many solid grounds to support it, and will consider whether he may not thence gain an insight into the whole by unbiassed and earnest inquiry, and especially may find the passages in question brought into their true light. The result will then be gained, that these passages could not refer to the period before the destruction of Jerusalem, far less that they *must* be referred to that early period. But it is one of the fundamental defects of the theology of the present day, that criticism is brought into play before exegesis has sufficiently done its part, and that the crudest thoughts are proclaimed with naive confidence as "the result of the more exact and more perfect exegetical investigations, for which the age is distinguished;" whence the path is at once taken to the region of criticism, and the most solid arguments both of an external and internal nature are unscrupulously set aside. This is certainly not the scientific mode of proceeding, however commonly it boasts of being so.

THE

REVELATION OF SAINT JOHN.

THE SUPERSCRIPTION.

The title in most copies is: Revelation of John the Theologue (or the Divine). But this title cannot have been original; it belongs to a pretty late period. This is manifest even from the fact, that other epithets also occur in the manuscripts. Vers. 1—3 occupy the place of a title, and it is not probable that John gave a double title to his book. Nor would John have called his book in one breath the Revelation of John and the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The first name could only be applied to the book by a pretty hard and easily misunderstood abbreviation: The Revelation of Jesus Christ communicated through John; but the book would more fitly have been denominated: The prophecy or vision of John. The surname Theologue, which John here bears, is founded on a consideration of the distinctive character of his Gospel, and is used in reference to a doubt, which arose at a pretty late period, respecting the composition of the Revelation by the apostle and evangelist John. In regard to the explanation of this surname expositors differ. But the only right one is that which refers it to the character of the Gospel of John in relation to the three first gospels. Having respect especially to the character of its *commencement* as compared with that of the other gospels, the ancients designated John's Gospel as the pre-eminently theological and spiritual one, Thus Clemens of Alexandria says in Eusebius, B. VI. c. 14, with respect to a tradition, which he had received from the oldest presbyters: "Those gospels, which contain the genealogies, were the first to

be published. . . But John, last of all, perceiving that what had reference to the body had already in the gospel been sufficiently detailed, and being encouraged by his intimate friends and moved by the Spirit, he wrote a *spiritual* gospel." Eusebius himself says in B. III. c. 24: "John has, therefore, with propriety passed by the genealogy of our Lord after the flesh, because it had previously been written by Matthew and Luke, but commenced with the theology (the doctrine of the divinity), which had been reserved for him by the divine Spirit as something better."[1] Thus understood the form of the superscription before us corresponds to the others; such as: The Revelation of John the apostle and evangelist. The two have this in common, that they both alike mark the identity of John the seer and John the evangelist. The same view is farther confirmed by the fact, that the ecclesiastical writer, with whom John first bears the name of the Theologue, Eusebius (in Praep. xi. 18) applies it also to Moses, B. VII. c. 9, and to Paul, B. XI. c. 19. This fact abundantly shows, that the name must have been intended to designate John only with respect to the three other evangelists, and that it is to be referred neither to the doctrine of the divinity of the Logos, nor (with Züllig) to the prophetical inspiration.[2] If it is asked, why should John have been designated thus only in the superscription of the Apocalypse, the answer is, because it was designed thereby to intimate that this John is no other than the evangelist.

THE PROLOGUE.

(Ch. i. 1—3.)

The original title, which at the same time serves as an intro-

1 Comp. Basilius in the Catena in John 1: Τοῦ εὐαγγελικοῦ κηρύγματος ὁ μεγαλοφωνότατος, καὶ πάσης μὲν ἀκοῆς μείζονα, πάσης δὲ διανοίας σεμνότερα φθεγξάμενος ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐστίν, οὕτως παροιμιάζων.

2 There is no proof that the church fathers named John the Theologue with special reference to the Apocalypse. The epithet everywhere refers to the Gospel; comp., besides Eusebius, the passages quoted by Lampe in his Proleg. in Joh. B. I. c. 7, § 22. With the supposition that the surname of Theologue refers to the prophetical inspiration, it ill accords what the presbyter Gregory says in his life of Gregory of Nazianzen, μόνον τοῦτον μετὰ τὸν εὐαγγελιστὴν Ἰωάννην θεολόγον ἀναφανῆναι. But Gregory of Nazianzen was certainly no prophet.

duction, and the special object of which is to indicate the great importance of the book, runs thus: *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to shew to his servants, what must shortly come to pass; and he signified it by his angel, whom he sent, to his servant John.* 2. *Who has testified of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, what he saw.* 3. *Blessed is he who reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep what is written therein; for the time is near.*—The book is called in ver. 1, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ.* The word *revelation*, or disclosing, apocalypsis, which in the New Testament is chiefly used by Paul, stands in a near relation to the word mystery or secret. Mysteries are the object of revelation, and the territory of the latter extends as far as the territory of mysteries. See Dan. ii. 19, Ephes. iii. 3, "By revelation he has made known to me the secret," ver. 5, 9, Rom. xvi. 25. The condition of the revelation, accordingly, is the inaccessibility of a matter to the ordinary faculties of the mind. For, this is the common idea of a mystery. Hence, the sphere of revelation comprehends also that, which has already been made objectively manifest, and has become the church's own, in so far as it may be communicated to a particular individual. For, the Christian doctrine as such is super-rational; and of the faith in Christ it constantly holds, that flesh and blood cannot themselves produce and exercise it, Matth. xi. 25, ss., xvi. 17, John vi. 44. So we read of a revelation in Eph. i. 17, where Paul designated as a product of it the Christian wisdom, which he sought for the Ephesians. But commonly the word is used to denote the new disclosure of truths, which hitherto had lain beyond the reach of the mind. Such can only be found in moments of holy consecration, when the soul, as the chosen instrument of God, is raised above itself and is brought into closest fellowship with God, the source of truth. Hence, the *revelations* in 2 Cor. xii. 1 appear in immediate connection with the *visions;* and the state in which Paul received the revelations is represented as that of ecstacy, during which he was raised to the third heavens, and heard unutterable words. So too in Acts x., it was in a state of ecstacy, and by vision, that St Peter received the revelation concerning the reception of the heathen to the blessings of salvation (ver. 10 and 17, comp. also Eph. iii. 5).

Revelation here and prophecy, προφητεία, in ver. 3 (comp. xxii. 18, 19) correspond with each other, just as revelation and prophecy in 1 Cor. xiv. 6.[1] The book is the revelation of Jesus Christ and the prophecy of John. The object of the revelation are the mysteries; its product is the prophecy. No revelation without prophecy and inversely. What viewed in respect to the manner of receiving it is revelation, the same, when viewed in respect to the manner of its delivery, is prophecy. Paul says in the passage referred to above, "Now, brethren, if I come to you and speak with tongues, what shall I profit you except I shall speak to you either by revelation or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?" Here we have a double pair of corresponding parts; revelation and prophecy constitute the one, knowledge and doctrine the other. "The speaker attains to his knowing either by revelation, by a supernatural communication imparted by the Spirit of God, and when he gives utterance to this, he is a prophet. Or it may be by learning, meditation, inquiry in a merely human manner, and with the common help of the Holy Spirit; and then his knowing is a gnosis, a knowledge, and the utterance of it, in a manner that should now be naturally adapted to the mode of receiving it, will be a purely intelligent one, working on the understanding." As the condition, in which the revelation is received, differs from that in which the knowledge is matured, so the mode of deliverance in the prophet differs from that of common teaching. That which has been received in ecstacy can only be delivered in an elevated state of mind; that is, in so far as the delivery stands immediately connected with the receiving, and the receiving has not, as was usually the case with Paul, been already wrought into a sort of knowledge. All prophecy, just because it has revelation for its basis, is closely allied to poetry, though it does not properly resolve itself into this: its respect to the church, and the understanding of her members, prevents it from doing so. It must not wing its flight higher than where these can follow. The speech of the tongue may be designated the embryo of revelation and of prophecy. Secrets are

1 In respect to the internal connection of revelation and prophecy, and the limitation of the former by the latter, the passage 1 Cor. xiv. 29, 30, should also be compared, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge; if any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace."

the common object of both, but the speech of the tongue does not rise above a general connection with them, it does not reach even to the clear knowledge of them, and is hence incapable of coming forth to fulfil the office of teaching in the church.

No solid reason exists for the assertion of Lücke, that the word *revelation*, besides its general import, has also the special meaning of eschatological apocalypsis, or revelation in respect to the final development of the kingdom of God and the coming of the Lord Jesus. By the word itself nothing is indicated here as to the special object of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. But the thing to be supplied is furnished by the circumstances which occasioned the revelation. These determine the character of every revelation and prophecy. None swims in the air, none is entirely general. The object of the revelation given to the prophets is uniformly such, as in the given circumstances was adapted for counsel, for warning, or consolation. And if it is certain, that the starting-point here was the oppression of the church by the world-power, the object of the Revelation of Christ to the apostle can only be, what was fitted for the edification of the church under such circumstances, the preservation of the church amid the persecutions of the adversary, the destruction of the latter, and the final complete triumph of the church. It is a fundamental error in the older expositors, that they did not perceive how the object of the Revelation was more exactly determined by the relations of the time, and that we have here to do with a discovery of Jesus Christ, disclosing that after which every one *then* inquired, and the darkness of which lay like an oppressive night-mare upon all bosoms. They proceeded on the ground, that the Apocalypse must spread itself over the entire range of church history, and converted it into a simple compend of this.

Revelation, and the prophecy which springs out of it, are under the New Testament closely joined with the apostleship, and belong to its prerogatives. Acts x. relates an important revelation granted to the apostle Peter. In regard to the revelations and prophetical states of Paul, see 2 Cor. xii., Eph. iii. 3, Gal. i. 12, ii. 2. In Eph. iii. 5, 6, "Which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed into the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by

the gospel," the prophets are personally identical with the apostles. For it is a historical verity, that by no other than the apostles, namely, Peter and Paul, was the truth in question conveyed to the minds of Christians in the way of supernatural revelation. Paul says immediately before, "Through revelation did he make known to me this mystery." Also in Rev. xviii. 20, which points back to Eph. iii. 5, the apostles are not personally separate from the prophets, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her." This is manifest from the circumstance, that history knows nothing of persecutions by the Roman world-power against prophets, except against the three among the apostles, Peter, Paul, and John. Instead of the apostles and prophets in ch. xviii. 20, we have in ch. xi. 18, merely prophets along with the saints; so that the apostles are comprehended under them. Were it otherwise, had not prophecy culminated in them in like manner as the apostleship, the names of the twelve apostles could not with propriety have stood alone on the foundations of the New Jerusalem, ch. xxi. 14; elsewhere the prophets are coupled with them as occupying this position. The gift of prophecy is of all the highest. New truths could only be communicated through it, so as to obtain a place in the conscience of believers, and become thereby more widely diffused as knowledge and doctrine. The whole position of the apostles must have been changed, if this gift had not been concentrated in them. According to the measure of prophetic gifts was the place that the apostles respectively occupied; so that it was not accidental, that precisely the three, Peter, Paul, and John, who otherwise were so pre-eminent above the rest, were also the most highly distinguished by these gifts. Such as possessed no prophetical gifts might indeed have been faithful witnesses of Christ, but they could not fulfil the other design of the apostleship, that of receiving the much that the Lord had still to say to them, but which they were not able to bear during his personal sojourn on earth, John xvi. 12. For, there is no other organ for the recipiency of new truths, but the prophetical. "The comfroter" was also, according to John xvi. 13, etc., to make known the future to the apostles. But instruction respecting the future is only received by revelation, and communicated to others by prophecy. What is written in the Acts of the mani-

festations of other prophets, serves to confirm what we have said —see xi. 27, xiii. 1, xv. 32, xxi. 10. All there bears a subordinate character. There is no trace of anything like a communication of new and important truths.

From what has been said, it is obvious what we are to make of Bleek's assertion (Beitr. p. 191), "When we consider what special weight is attached in ch. xxi. 14 to the apostolic dignity, it becomes the more improbable that the Seer should not have been expressly designated as such in ch. i. 1, if the author really belonged to the number of the apostles, or wished to be regarded as of that class." The author has actually done what is here desired; he has in the most emphatic manner described himself as an apostle. For, a prophecy of such a marked and important character as is contained in this book could only have proceeded from the circle of apostles; nay, more, could only have proceeded from one, who among the apostles themselves held a leading place. He, who possessed the highest apostolical gift in the highest degree, did not need to begin with assuring us that he was an apostle. This was to be understood of itself.

It admits of no doubt that the Revelation of Jesus Christ is the revelation which has Jesus Christ for its author, or which was communicated by him. This appears from the corresponding *testimony* of Jesus Christ in ver. 2; from a comparison of the passages i. 10, ss. iv. 1, xix. 10, xxii. 16, where in like manner the matter of the Apocalypse is spoken of as derived from Christ; and from the obvious design of the prologue, which manifestly intends to indicate the high importance of the book by the circumstance of its contents having been derived from God and Christ. Entirely analogous is Gal. i. 12, "For, I have not received it of man, nor was I taught it but by the *Revelation of Jesus Christ.*" Of course, the fact of the contents of this book being derived from the Revelation of Jesus Christ does not exclude a manifold human preparation, but rather demands it: especially a zealous investigation and study of Scripture, a profound reflection on the divine purposes, and an energetic and earnest desire to penetrate the divine secrets. Still, the remark of Bengel is perfectly just: "What the apostles and evangelists have written elsewhere they brought forth under the good hand of God from

that treasury of wisdom and knowledge which they had constantly beside them. For that, however, which John has written in this book, he must have been quite specially furnished. The Lord Jesus Christ is himself the author, John only holds the pen. Hence we may understand the peculiar distinction which belongs to this book, and on account of which it ought to be held especially precious. This consideration also explains how, while John has so many endearing epithets in his epistles, "my little children," "my brethren," "beloved," none whatever are to be met with in the whole of this book. He writes here not as of himself, but in the name of Jesus Christ.—Of what appears in Revelation much certainly is to be found also in the old prophecies, to which reference is expressly made in ch. x. 7, but by no means the whole. For how otherwise could it be said that God had given the revelation to Jesus Christ? But in no part does the Revelation come into conflict with the Scriptures which were formerly given by God; it rather gives a summary representation of all that in ancient prophecy still remained to be fulfilled after the times of Christ and the apostles." Another remark of Bengel we cannot so fully accord with: "The Old Testament dispensation was the time of promise, and hence there are so many prophetical books among the Old Testament Scriptures. The New Testament dispensation is the time of fulfilment, though not without intimations of what belongs to a still coming future; and therefore the greater number of books in New Testament scripture are books of history and doctrine—one only avowedly prophetical, and that in the full, clear, elevated style which befits the new dispensation." This statement is grounded on the erroneous assumption, that the only design of prophecy was to disclose the future. It would be more correct to say that, under the New Testament, Christ has appeared as the way, the truth, and the life. The main source of higher and clearer views was thus at once laid open to the church, so that knowledge and doctrinal instruction came to occupy the foreground. Prophecy was required only for the new things that still remained to be developed.

Which God gave to him. Revelation is properly the act of communication; comp. Gal. i. 12. Here, however, it also includes its object, that which is disclosed, and to this refers the

which. It is one of the pervading characteristics of John's Gospel, that in reference to Christ it "constantly alternates between a respect to the position of dependance and the position of substantial identity" (Koestlin Lehrbegr. des John, p. 101), constantly makes statements which imply, that the Son has every thing that the Father has, and yet has nothing but what he has of the Father. In this characteristic the Revelation stands in the closest affinity with the Gospel. In particnlar, two passages of the Gospel should be compared with the one before us. The first is ch. xii. 48, 49, "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." This passage so far also coincides with ours, that it ascribes the origin of Christ's word to God, in order to impress the idea of its importance, and of the awful guilt of rejecting it. Then ch. xvi. 14, 15, "All that the Father hath is mine. Therefore, said I, he will take of mine and shew it unto you." He had said just before, "He will shew you things to come" As in the preceding passage what Christ had spoken upon earth was ascribed to God, so here is the same done in respect to what, after his departure, was communicated through the Spirit to his apostles.—Therefore, every one who approaches this book has to do with the Most High God; and the warning is virtually sounded at the outset: Take off thy shoe, for the place is holy ground. A book which has the Almighty for its original author, must be frightful in its threatenings, and in its promises the object of unlimited confidence. He whom it assures of salvation may well rejoice in hope even in the midst of tribulation. For God is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent; and for him nothing is impossible.

To shew to his servants. The word *shewing* is never used in the signification of making known, but always in that either of causing to see, or of proving.[1] As the latter is not suitable here,

1 In Matth. xvi. 21, δεικνύειν is not, to give to know, but to prove, to make manifest from the declarations of the Old Testament. The subject has respect, not to the fact but to the necessity for the fact, "From that time forth Jesus began to shew to his disciples how that he must go into Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and

we must adhere to the former. That the shewing refers to the presentation of the things communicated to the internal vision, is clear from the other passages in the book in which the verb occurs; it is the word specially appropriated in a manner to this act, comp. iv. 1, xvii. 1, xxii. 1, 6, 8. To the shewing, on the part of God, corresponds the seeing, on the part of the prophet;[1] comp. Gen. xli. 22, "And I saw in the dream, and behold seven ears."—If the import of the *shewing* is thus rightly determined, by the *servants of God* we can only understand the prophets, for to them alone belongs the *seeing*. By the current interpretation, it is believers generally that are meant by these servants, who are undoubtedly so called in ch. ii. 20, vii. 3, xxii. 3. But, for understanding the expression here of the prophets, who are also in the Old Testament often named by way of eminence God's servants (Jer. vii. 25, xxvi. 5; Dan. ix. 6; Am. iii. 7; 2 Kings xvii. 13, 23), for understanding it of them as the persons, who had not merely for themselves to execute the will of God, but to serve him in his kingdom, and so filled in this respect the highest place,[2] there are other considerations besides those just mentioned. First, the connection. The Seer descends from God to those who read and hear the book. With these latter he first begins at ver. 3; and the chain would be broken if here he already speaks of believers generally. Then there is the confirmation yielded by ch. xix. 10, "I am thy fellow-servant and of thy brethren, who have the testimony of Jesus;" and ch. xxii. 9, "I am thy fellow-servant and of thy brethren the prophets." The comparison of these passages leaves no doubt, that the servants are here also the species of prophets; John, the servant of God, the individual, who represents the species. Equally decisive is ch. xxii. 6, "And the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass." By the

chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day," comp. xxvi. 54, Luke xxiv. 44—46.

[1] Comp. the ראה in Am. vii. 1 (LXX., οὕτως ἔδειξέ μοι κύριος ὁ θεός), iv. 7, Jer. xxiv. 1, "And the Lord made me see, and behold two baskets of figs;" LXX., ἔδειξέ μοι κύριος δύο καλάθους σύκων; Mich.: idem est ac si diceret: monstravit mihi dominus in visione duos, etc., Ez. xl. 4.

[2] Comp. John xv. 20, Matth. xxiv. 45, ss. xxv. 14, ss., and on the distinction between servants of God in a general, and in a more special sense, see Keil on Joshua, p. 3.

servants of God here can only be understood the prophets, who are represented in John. For, the sending of the angel appears as the indication of the fact, that the Lord is the God of the spirits of the prophets. And the expression *to shew*, points back to ch. xvii. 1, xxi. 9, xxii. 1, where the angel shows to John the Seer; comp. also xxii. 8, "And I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who shewed me these things." Finally, the expression *to shew* is again resumed by the subsequent words: he has signified it.

What must shortly come to pass. The fulfilment of what is announced in the Revelation is here placed in the immediate future. So also in other passages. According to ver. 3, and ch. xxii. 10, the time is near. "I come quickly," says the Lord in xxii. 7, 12, 20, iii. 11, ii. 5, 16. These declarations are opposed to the view of those who would convert the entire book into a history of the time of the end, and confirms the view, which treats it as our companion through the whole course of history. Neither do those do it justice who remark with Bengel, "therefore did the fulfilment begin immediately after the date of the book." Not merely was the beginning in general ascribed to the immediate future, but such a beginning as was to be the beginning of the end. There is here a touchstone for the exposition of the book, before which that of Bengel and the old Protestant one cannot stand. For there the main burden of the book refers to relations, of which *no notion* could as yet be formed. "The keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps," "I am with you always to the end of the world,"—of these truths, the "shortly coming to pass," and the "I come quickly" of this book, are the necessary consequence. The boundless energy of the divine nature admits here of no delay. There is nothing of quiescence or indolent repose in God. His appearing often to linger is merely on account of our short-sightedness. He is secretly working for salvation and destruction, when he seems to us, perhaps, to be standing aloof; and only when by the execution of his judgment we are called to enter into his salvation, do we learn consequentially what is meant by the "shortly." At every period, when the book acquires new significance by Satan stirring up new wars against Christ and his church, the "shortly," and "I come quickly," also spring again into new life. Where the carcase is,

there the eagles are constantly gathered together; and where the distress is the greatest, there the help is also nearest. God be praised that we are never pointed to the far-distant future; but that the retributive justice of God against sin, and his pity and compassion toward the wretched, tread closely on each other's heels.

It is nothing but a shift to say, as numbers do here, that the measure of time we are to think of is not the human, but the divine, with which a thousand years are as one day (Ps. xc. 4, 2 Pet. iii. 8). The remarks made respecting this in my Christology on Hos. ii. 6, "Yet once it is a little while, and I shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land," are equally applicable here: "Whoever speaks to men, must speak according to the human mode of viewing things, or give notice if he does otherwise. It is for the purpose of consoling us, that the prophet declares the shortness of the time. But for such a purpose, that only was suitable which might appear short in the eyes of men. Only in mockery or by deception could the prophet have substituted that, which was short in the reckoning of God." We have there shewn, that the shaking spoken of began to take effect in the immediate future. The axe was already laid to the root of the Persian kingdom (as in the time of John to that of the Roman), and its subsequent visible fall was only the manifestation of a much earlier latent one. De Wette's remark, that the shortness must not be taken too stringently, that it was used to encourage the suffering and warn the impenitent, represents the Seer's God and the Lord himself, who in Luke xviii. 8 likewise promises a speedy deliverance to his faithful people, as acting like the worthless physician who feeds his patients with false hopes. That Luke xviii. 7 can only be quoted in support of such a view on a wrong interpretation, is manifest. And in refutation of it, as also against the notion of its being the *divine* measurement of time that is to be understood, there is the circumstance that in the fundamental passage, Ezekiel xii., to which the expression in ver. 3, "the time is near," refers, the declaration, "the days are near," in ver. 23, corresponds to "in *your* days, ye rebellious house, will I do it," in ver. 25.[1] On the

1 The *ἐν τάχει*, it appears, was felt to be difficult so early as the time of Dionysius of Alexandria. For, that in Eusebius, vii. 25, he should have omitted *ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι*, can

"what must shortly come to pass," comp. iv. 1, xxii 6. The best commentary is to be found in Isa. xiv. 27, "For the Lord of Hosts hath purposed it, who will disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, who will turn it back?" So also the *must* in Matth. xxiv. 6 is to be understood of the necessity, which has its foundation in the divine purpose. On the other hand, in Matth. xxvi. 54, the necessity rests primarily on the prophecies: it must fall out so, because it has been so predicted. But the prophecies are of weight only in so far as they manifest the divine purpose, so that the matter still returns back to this. Here a reference to the prophecies, as the more remote one, would have been more definitely marked.

And he signified (it) by his angel, whom he sent, to his servant John. We must not explain in this manner: he signified it, the revelation; but rather: he signified it, viz., what must shortly come to pass. For the expression, "he signified," resumes the former, "to show" again. The Revelation is given to Jesus Christ by God, that he may show to his servants what must shortly be done, and he has accordingly signified it to his servant John.[1] Instead of: by his angel, whom he sent, several explain improperly: in that he sent a message by his angel.[2] It is said

scarcely have been accidental, but was done for the purpose of connecting the ἐν τάχει with δεῖξαι. This way of dealing with the subject was quite accordant with the whole character of the man, who in his artful way would set aside that which was not agreeable to his own feelings.

1 The σημαίνειν occurs also in three passages of John's Gospel, and, as here, of the discovery of future things, xii. 33, xviii. 32, xxi. 19. It is found besides only in the Acts xi 28, xxv. 27. It means simply to signify, or inform of, and corresponds to הודיע in Ex. xviii. 20, and to הגיד in Esth. ii. 22. The exposition of Bengel: "The Lord has indicated to you things, through various marks and images, which shall be understood when they have been fully considered, and when one has been compared with another," is without any support from the usage. Acts xxv. 27 is against it. That the word in New Testament Scripture is used predominantly of the announcement beforehand of future things, is to be explained from this, that it belongs to the higher and more elevated style; on which account it is also found chiefly among the Poets in classical Greek. Still more objectionable is the rendering of Züllig: and which he made to be understood. The word does not bear this meaning, nor would it be suitable here. The angel must be a member of the chain, which begins with God, and ends with the hearer, and it is not the explanation, but only the communication through the angel, which comes into notice.

2 These persons refer to some passages of the Old Testament, in which after verbs of sending the accusative, the message, is to be supplied; Ex. vi. 13, "Send by whose hand thou wilt send;" 1 Kings ii. 25, 1 Sam. xvi. 20. But in the New Testament ἀποστέλλειν is never so used, and πέμπειν only in a more than doubtful reading of Lachmann's

here, as also at the close in ch. xxii. 6—16, that Christ through the mediation of his angel communicated to his servant John the knowledge of the future. We might with propriety explain: through his angel, to whom he committed this business; so that the expression: by his angel, would virtually be the same as: by one of his angels. But as in the Old Testament, and especially in those prophets, with whom John has the closest affinity, a particular angel is brought into notice, who stands beside the angel of the Lord as the meditating agent of his revelations, we are naturally led to think of such being understood here. Even so early as at Ex. xxxii. 34 we find along with the highest revealer of God, the angel of the Lord or the Logos, an angel placed in a subordinate relation to him as his inseparable attendant. In Daniel the angel of the Lord appears under the symbolical name of Michael. But as he commonly manifests himself in overwhelming majesty, the angel Gabriel acts as mediator between him and the prophet, comp. viii. 16, ix. 21. In Zechariah "the angel who speaks with him" is a standing figure. It is this angelic minister who conducts him from the common state to one of ecstacy, awakens in him the spiritual sense to apprehend what was presented in the vision, and explains it to him, so as to enable him to break through the shell into the kernel. It is remarkable that while here in the Prologue the agency of the angel in the business of the revelation is set forth in a quite general way, nothing is said in regard to the manner in which his agency more particularly displayed itself till we come to the two last groups, the vision of the judgment on the three enemies of God's kingdom, where he is introduced at the very commencement (ch. xvii. 1, comp. v. 7—15, xix. 9), and the vision of the New Jerusalem. There are two ways in which this difficulty may be solved. Several suppose that the main subject of the book is concentrated in the

text in Matth. xi. 2, *πέμψας διὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ*, f. *δύο τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ*. More to the purpose is the application of another and more common Old Testament usage, the omission of the person after verbs of sending. Comp. for example Gen. xxxi. 4: "And Jacob sent and called Leah;" xli. 8: "And he sent and called the Chartummin of Egypt, *Καὶ ἀποστείλας ἐκάλεσε πάντας τοὺς ἐξηγητὰς Αἰγύπτου*; Jos. ii. 3; 1 Sam. iv. 4; Job i. 5. With *ἀποστείλας* of the New Testament, where it is joined to a verb, the accusative of the person is always to be supplied, comp. Matth. ii. 16; Mark vi. 17; Acts vii. 14. The only difference in regard to our passage is, that here the *ἀποστείλας* follows; but this arises from the *ἔσήμανε* resuming the *δεῖξαι*, and hence properly opening the sentence.

two last groups, to which the others served only as preparatory visions, and that the mediation of the angel is here ascribed to the whole from being so specially connected with the most important part. One might also conceive that the prologue was added by John after he had finished the whole, while the action of the angel was still fresh in his mind. But we can hardly feel satisfied with this, as the angel even at first seems to form a necessary link in the chain; and we may rather suppose that the agency which belongs to the angel throughout the whole was employed so as in the first instance to raise John from the common to an ecstatic condition, and then at ch. xvii. to put forth another and more special operation. If the spiritual sense in John was first opened by the angel and kept awake, then he was the mediating agent of the message for him. A revelation is of no use for one whose mind is not prepared to receive it; the indispensable condition is, that the seer be in the Spirit, i. 10, iv. 2. It is in favour of this supposition that the mediating angel in the two prophets, whom John more especially followed, Daniel and Zechariah, is a pervading one, and that a leading characteristic intimation in each of them is their announcing, that it was thus they were raised into the ecstatic condition. In Dan. x. 16 Gabriel touches Daniel's lips, and thereby inspires him with the powers of a higher life, comp. ver. 10, viii. 17. On Zech. i. 9 I have already remarked in my Christology, "that the words, *I will make you see what these are,* refer to the opening of the spiritual eye and ear of the prophet. Only when this had been done by the angelus interpres, could the prophet apprehend the declaration of the angel of the Lord, and the report of the ministering angels." On ch. iv. 1, where the angel is spoken of as awaking the prophet, like a man out of sleep, it was also said, "Between this vision and the preceding one we must suppose a pause to have taken place. The angel had withdrawn for a little from the prophet, and the latter had returned from his ecstacy into the state of common life. The common and the ecstatic condition stand related to each other as sleeping and being awake." It is not as an apostle that John is named here the servant of Christ, but as a prophet. This is evident from the relation in which "to his servant John" stands here to the preceding expression "to his servants." We are certainly, however, conducted indirectly to the apostleship; since re-

velations of such high importance as those contained here, were not, as formerly stated, given beyond the limits of the apostleship, and could not have been given without shaking the foundation of the apostolic dignity. Then, only such a person as John could be meant, as one whom all would naturally think of, and who held a pre-eminent place in the churches, for which the book was primarily intended. Otherwise the special designation, which is always designed in the prophetic writings to convey through the authority of the instrument a pledge for the truth of the contents, would have failed of its object. And history knows of no other but the apostle John.—In his Gospel John has only in a gentle way indicated his name by describing himself, with reference to the import of his name (John, he to whom the Lord is gracious) as the disciple whom Jesus loved. But here he gives his name expressly. We find the same difference in the Old Testament also between the historical and the prophetical writings of the prophets. The history had its security in the joint knowledge of contemporaries; but in prophecy personality is of the greatest moment, and the anonymous is excluded. Nameless prophecies have no place in Old Testament Scripture.

In ver. 2, "Who has testified of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, what he saw," there is the same tendency apparent as in ver. 1, to render manifest the high importance of the book, and signalize it as deriving its matter through Christ from the Supreme God. Hence everything of an independent nature in the author is thrown into the shade, and he presents himself throughout as merely occupying the place of a servant, who faithfully announces his master's charges. John does not speak from himself; he merely testifies of the word of God, as it had been certified to him through the testimony of Jesus Christ. Therefore in the threatenings, promises, and exhortations of the book we are not to look at the person of the writer, but constantly to remember, that it is the Most High God who speaks here. The blessedness pronounced in ver. 3 on those who read and hear, thus becomes most appropriate. The expression: who has testified, not: who testifies, which has given rise to much misunderstanding, was first placed by Bengel in its true light: "It is the manner of the ancients in their books and writings, that they often frame their words not in respect to the time when they wrote, but

to that when their writings should be read. "I Paul write it with my hand," might have been said at Philem. ver. 19, when Paul wrote at Rome; but as Philemon was to read the epistle in Asia, he put instead: "I have written it" (comp. also Rom. xvi. 22). In like manner when John wrote in Patmos, it might have been said, he testifies; but in respect to the book being read in Asia, he preferred saying, he has testified. And in ver. 3 it is not said, what is written, but what has been written." Compare also what has been remarked at ver. 9 on the expression, "I *was* on the isle Patmos."

By the *word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ* is never of itself denoted the prophetic communication. Here it is used of this only on account of the connection with what precedes, though without implying anything as to its general import, and in reference to the earlier and different record borne to the testimony of Jesus Christ in the Gospel and Epistles of John. (See the Introduction p. 17.) Bengel remarks: "In this book the things that concern God and the things that concern Jesus Christ, are often conjoined together. Immediately before it was said, God had given the revelation to Jesus Christ, and now John bears record to the word of God, and along with that to the testimony of Jesus Christ." In this connection, then, the testimony of Jesus Christ can only be the testimony which Jesus Christ delivers. For thus only could the object be gained, of tracing up to the Most High God the subject-matter of the book. Jesus Christ gives testimony to the word of God, and John again gives testimony to the word of Christ, and so far to the word of God. To the same result we are also led by the connection of the testimony of Jesus Christ with the word of God. As the word of God is the word which God utters, so the testimony of Jesus Christ must be the testimony which Jesus Christ delivers. Besides, more careful investigation shews that the testimony of Jesus, who in ver. 5 is called the faithful witness, and who manifests himself near the close, at ch. xxii. 20, as the person who attests the contents of the book, is uniformly in this book, not the testimony of Jesus, but the testimony which Jesus delivers. It has this meaning also where the testimony of Jesus stands alone, and is not coupled with the word of God; comp. ch. xii. 17. In the Gospel of John, likewise, ch.

iii. 32, 33, the testimony of Jesus Christ is the testimony which he delivers. The *testifying*, moreover, is a word of which John is particularly fond, and is of frequent occurrence in all his writings. Christ *testifies* of what he has heard and seen, and so also do his disciples. John xv. 27 is in perfect unison with the "who has testified" in the passage before us.

The words: what (comp. the ὅσα in John xxi. 25) he saw, determine more precisely the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. They shew that the subject here is of those higher communications which were received in vision by the internal eye. Seeing is used thus of the prophetic vision in an entire series of passages of this book, for example, i. 11, 12, 17, 19, 20, v. 1. By the expression: what he saw, the feeling of his own mind, the intermingling play of a luxuriant fancy, is quite excluded. "Inasmuch as 'he saw,'" says Bengel, "we have the strongest assurance of the divine origin of this book. To see and to testify bear reference one to another. The matters successively presented to him were partly seen and partly heard. But to see is the more excellent. Hence, the prophets were anciently called seers, and this book itself has the name of a revelation." Till Bengel's time it was customary to refer the verse before us to the composition of the Gospel by John. But Bengel deprived this interpretation of its only support by the proper explanation of the words: "who has testified," and understood the verse of the apostle's "obedience, diligence, and faithfulness in describing this revelation." It is a matter of surprise that the reference to the Gospel should still have found its defenders in the present century. One does not see for what purpose John could here refer to his Gospel. The relation in which he stood to those to whom the book was more immediately sent, leaves no room to doubt that he wished to make himself known, and so as that he might be distinguished from others of the same name. His first readers and hearers must have known what it was they were directed to. But if John had really pointed to the Gospel, he would certainly have expressed himself more plainly. He would in that case assuredly not have omitted, "also formerly." But the reference to the Gospel is absolutely excluded by the phrase, "what he saw." This does not serve, according to the supposition in question, as an explanatory clause added to the "word of

God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." This latter must refer to the words of Christ, and the other, "what he saw," to his deeds. An *and* would then have been indispensable, coupling the two together.[1] As an additional explanatory clause, the words "what he saw" are only such discourses as have been seen or received in vision. Then there is the circumstance to which Hoffmann has drawn attention, that the explanation would set aside a link in the chain that cannot easily be dispensed with. At the close of ver. 1, the word of God is first represented as coming into contact with John. But we expect, before a transition is made to the hearers and readers, to have some account of his own agency in reference to the matter. "What Jesus had shewn to John must be written down and published, before any one can read what the prophet saw." In fine, the reference to the Gospel would destroy the unity of the prologue, interrupt its regular progression, and rob ver. 3 of its foundation, for which it would need to look back to ver. 1.

The third verse pronounces him blessed, "who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep what is written therein." Blessed, it is said in xxii. 14, are they who keep his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter in by the gates into the city. Blessed, according to ch. xix. 9, are those who are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Blessed, it is once more said, ch. xx. 6, and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Accordingly, the benediction here refers mainly to what is to be found in another state of being, to the participation first in the bliss of heaven, and afterwards in the kingdom of glory upon earth. Still, we must not limit it to these. In this book also another recompense of fidelity is often discoursed of, which must not be excluded here, since the word employed is comprehensive of all the good, which is obtained as the reward of fidelity—the secret and wonderful preservation of true believers from the plagues which fall upon the world; ch. vii. 1—8, iii. 10. In the conclusion, which corresponds to the beginning here, ch. xxii. 18, 19, a twofold threatening is held out against those who, after the original passages in Deut. iv. 2, xii.

1 The apprehension of this difficulty has given rise to the reading ὅσα τε in some critical helps, against which it is enough to say, that the light and airy τε is never found in the Revelation.

32, add to or take away from the book with the view of getting rid of the obligations of duty, viz. a participation in the plagues which are described in the book; and exclusion from the tree of life and the holy city. The contrast in regard to those who keep what is written, requires that the blessing pronounced on them should also have a double reference—preservation in the midst of plagues and eternal blessedness.—The description, "He who reads and they who hear," points, as the distinction of the singular and the plural shews, not to the two classes of such as could, and such as could not read, but the *reading* meant is like that mentioned in Luke iv. 16, the reading aloud in churches; so that the meaning is, he who reads in public and they who hear what is read. In ch. xxii. 17, 18, it is implied that hearing is the usual way of coming to the knowledge of the book.—The book contains a word of prophecy; whence we conclude that it is not made up of mere citations from the Old Testament. These are suitably found in calm argumentative discourses, but not in such as are of a divinely raised and excited character, which carry their own guarantee along with them. In the latter the references to the earlier portions of God's word must be of a more delicate nature, by allusion merely, or immediate appropriation.[1] Such also is the relation of the prophecies of the Old Testament to the books of Moses; all pervaded and saturated with references to them, but without any formal citations. The expression of *keeping* the word, the command, the faith, etc. (in contrast to the thoughtless forgetting of it in James i. 25), is one much liked by the faithful and conservative John; comp. iii. 8, xiv. 12. That the keeping is the thing principally in view, to which the blessing belongs, and that the reading and hearing is only the preliminary condition to this, is clear from ch. xxii. 7, where the keeping alone is mentioned, "Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." The person who has got to the close of the book has already fulfilled the condition. Comp. Rom. ii. 13, Jas. i. 22, 23,

1 Bengel: "Prophecies certify themselves by their own, and so by divine authority, in particular the Apocalypse, which therefore does not mention the ancient prophecies, except in the slump, and that only once, ch. x. 7. In other books of the New Testament, ancient prophecies are quoted, for the purpose of shewing their fulfilment; but not so in the Apocalypse. Hence, while Surenhusius could produce examples of quotations from the Old Testament in each of the evangelists, the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistles, he had none to produce from the Apocalypse."

25. That every thing is placed in the keeping points to the practical character, which continually attaches to Scripture prophecy, never being intended to serve for the gratification of a frivolous and prying curiosity, but always for promoting the divine life. The true prophet is a counseller, comp. Numb. xxiv. 14 (where see my Balaam), Isa. xli. 28. Bengel: "According to the diversity of the things, which are written in it, to the keeping belongs repentance, faith, patience, obedience, prayer, watching, stedfastness." The hearing and reading of the book, however, though only as conditional to the keeping, must be held to be a matter of high importance, especially for the times, in which there is a return of the circumstances that called it forth. "But whence comes it," says Bengel, "that the book now-a-days is so seldom read in the churches? Throughout the whole ecclesiastical year we have not a single Sunday or festival day, for which a text has been chosen out of Revelation. A wise householder will consider how he may in some other way compensate for this omission." The words, *for the time is near*, provide a reason for the call to keep, indirectly contained in the preceding; the time of the fulfilment is near, and consequently the time for rewarding the faithful and punishing the slothful; comp. 1 Pet iv. 7, "But the end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer," etc., Luke xxi. 34, Rom. xiii. 11.

THE SEVEN EPISTLES.

(Ch i. 4—iii. 22.)

Here we have first the salutation, ver. 4—6. According to the common view this does not belong to the series of epistles merely, but to the whole book. So Bengel: "The inscription of this book is in ver. 4—6, which gives to the whole book the nature of an epistle, with which also the conclusion agrees." But the following reason decides against this view. Both on the one side and the other of ch. i. 4—6, and ch. xxii., we find ourselves on the wide territory of the whole Christian church. Ch. i. 3 pronounces all without distinction blessed, who hear the book read and keep what is written in it. The conclusion is just as general as the beginning. According to ch. xxii. 6, God had

sent his angel to show to his servants what must shortly come to pass. In ver. 7 all are called blessed who keep the words of the prophecy of this book. The book closes in ver. 21 with the words: The grace of Jesus Christ be with all saints. In the middle portion also we everywhere meet with the entire body of the church, and not the slightest trace occurs of a special respect to the seven churches of Asia. In ch. vii. it is not the elect in Ephesus and the other Asiatic churches, but the servants of God at large, who are sealed. The twelve tribes of the children of Israel, and the 144,000 sealed ones, obviously represent the whole church. So likewise do the multitudes, whom no one could number, of every people, and tribe, and nation, and tongue, in ver. 9. In ch. xi. 1, the temple of God is a symbol of the church in its militant, as the New Jerusalem is of the same in its triumphant state. The sure result from these particulars is, that *the inscription does not belong to the book in general, but exclusively to the series of the seven epistles.* Had it been otherwise, there could not have failed to be some reference to them in the title and prologue of the book, as also in the portions subsequent to ch. iii. It is only the conclusion of the whole, indeed, which resembles an epistle, that gives any countenance to the supposition, that the inscription and the epistolary character extend to the entire contents. But the words: with all the saints, not with you all (as in Paul's epistles), shews that here we have only an imitation of the conclusion of an epistle. How certain it is, that the seven churches in Asia were representative in their different states of the church in general, it cannot be less certain, that what is written in the epistles is only *primarily* addressed to them. This is clear from the circumstance, that it has not the form of an accompaniment to the book, but is an integral part of the book itself, a book that is destined to the use of all God's servants. The special reason for the individualizing here is to be found in the subject-matter. The relation of this first series to the six following ones is generally this, that in the one is unfolded in detail the call, "Repent," "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high-way for our God," and in the other, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed" "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." When great manifestations of the Lord for the deliverance of his church, and for the execution of judgment on the world, are ready

to appear, there comes at the same time an urgent call on the Lord's people to prepare themselves aright for such manifestations, by purging out from among them the worldly elements, and having all in readiness for the Lord's work. Throughout the whole of this first series, the predominating element is the hortatory, or the pressing of such practical exhortations as fitly arose out of the near approach of the Lord. But in order that this might be effectively done, it must necessarily go into the special circumstances of the churches. The more pointed and particular it was, the more fully would it reach the general aim. The ample variety of the circumstances and the foundation of the general applicability of what was written, was indicated by the sevenfold number of the churches to which the epistles were addressed. But if thus a special reference becomes necessary in a part of the book to the churches of Asia, none could be more suitable than that actually chosen. The example of Paul already pointed in that direction, and it was due from John to his diocese as a compensation for his personal absence.

Ver. 4. *John to the seven churches in Asia. Grace be to you and peace from Him, who is, and who was, and who comes; and from the seven spirits, who are before his throne.* 5. *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first born of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins by his blood;* 6, *and made us a kingdom, priests to God and his Father: to Him be honour and power for ever and ever. Amen.* The author of the epistles no farther indicates his person than by the simple name of John. This alone marks it to be the apostle of that name. It designates a John, who held such a high pre-eminence among those who bore the name, that he would readily occur to every one, for whom the epistles and the book generally were more immediately destined. One, who stood merely in "certain relations" to the churches in question, could not have remained satisfied with so general a designation, and would certainly have added something more specific as his reason for addressing them. Let only the salutation be compared in the Epistle to the Romans. There we find an extended description of what constituted the apostle's right and obligation to write the epistle. "The Salutation," remarks Philippi, "is more lengthened

than in the other epistles of Paul. For the apostle had first to introduce himself to the church of the capital of the world, which was neither founded nor had yet been visited by him." So and still more would a certain John have found it necessary to introduce himself. The bare John must have been received with a sort of smile.

We are also led to think of the apostle John by the seven churches of Asia. It admits of no doubt, that the Asia meant here is Proconsular Asia, and that the limitation, which some have sought to establish in favour of a narrower territory, is arbitrary. But in this region there were other churches besides the seven, which are mentioned by name in this book. There was, for example, the church at Colosse, that at Hierapolis (Col. iv. 13), that at Tralles, which Cicero calls Gravis, locuples, ornata civitas, and that at Magnesia, which was in a flourishing state when the Ignatian epistles were written, and must certainly have existed at the date of the Apocalypse. Neither can we say that the more important churches, those which belonged to the greater cities, are the ones mentioned. For there is nothing in the description to indicate this; the cities named were not all of primary rank, especially Thyatira and Philadelphia; and others, which are not named, especially Tralles and Miletus, which last is called by Strabo next to Ephesus "the noblest and most distinguished city in Ionia," and by Pliny "the chief of Ionia," and where without doubt a church already existed. It is carefully to be noted that John does not write to seven churches in Asia specified by name; had he done so, we should have been obliged to cast about with Lücke for the reasons, on account of which these should have been chosen out of a greater number. But he writes simply to *the* churches of Asia. We have manifestly but one of two alternatives here—either there were in Asia only seven churches, or the address to precisely seven churches had its limitation from the person of the writer, virtually importing to *his* seven churches. In this case it would just be as if the president of certain affiliated churches in Prussia should write to the churches there; it would at once be understood, that those only were to be thought of, which belonged to that number. As the first of those alternatives is against the history, we are shut up to the latter. But this again obliges us to think only of the apostle

John as the author. History testifies respecting him, that he had a district in that particular part of Asia, which embraced quite a circle of churches, named by Tertullian "John's nurslings."[1] Eusebius reports from Origen, in B. III. c. 1, that when the apostles were scattered into different countries, John received for his share Asia, and continued there till he died at Ephesus. Clement of Alexandria relates, in Eusebius, B. III. c. 23, "When after the death of the tyrant he returned to Ephesus from the isle Patmos, he went also, when requested, to the neighbouring regions of the heathen; in some to appoint bishops, in some to institute entirely new churches, in others to appoint to the ministry some one of those that were pointed out by the Holy Ghost." In the same chapter of Eusebius Irenæus says, that the church of Ephesus had been founded by Paul, but that John continued to abide there till the times of Trajan. He elsewhere refers to "all the elders who in Asia had conferred with John the disciple of the Lord." Eusebius himself says, "he ruled the churches there." Not only is such a relation testified of John respecting those particular churches, testified of him alone, but from the very nature of things such a relation toward a circle of churches could only have subsisted with an apostle. It is not necessary, however, to suppose that the other churches in Asia besides those seven had rejected the apostolical authority of John, comp. 3 John v. 9. He may not have been able to extend his agency to them; though Clement expressly states, that after his return from Patmos he organised new churches, and consequently brought them within the field of his active operations.—The result which we have thus obtained from the address: "John to the seven churches," or from the fact that John here writes to the seven churches under his superintendence, is confirmed by the way and manner in which he writes to them. Lücke, p. 198, admits that

1 Adv. Marcion. iv. 5: Habemus et Joannis alumnas ecclesias. Nam etsi Apocalypsin ejus Marcion respuit, ordo tamen Episcoporum ad originem recensus in Joannem stabit auctorem. "The meaning is: We too have such churches as are nurslings of John, and which must be recognized as such by Marcion himself—those, namely, to whom he sent the seven epistles in the Apocalypse. For though Marcion will not admit the fact of these apocalyptic epistles being any proof of the connection between the churches and John, because he will not own the Apocalypse to have been written by John, yet if we trace the series of bishops in these churches up to its origin, we necessarily arrive at John as the founder of them." Rothe.

" the author could not have ventured, without some official position in the region of those churches, to address them as he did." It was such, indeed, as to require the whole fulness of the apostolico-prophetical authority. Without this he could never, for example, have written to Sardis, " I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest and art dead ;" and to Laodicea, " Because thou art lukewarm, and art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." And the commendations, not less than the sharpness of the reproofs, must have been hurtful, if the epistles had not proceeded from an ascertained servant of Jesus Christ. It cannot justly be objected, that it is not John who speaks in the seven epistles, but Christ. Unless the conviction had been deeply rooted in the churches, that the John, who held such communications with them, was the organ of Jesus Christ, the authority of Christ would not have covered the author. The question was sure to be asked, whether Christ had really authorized such messages to be sent, and the affirmative reply to this question could not have been expected from the churches, if they did not recognise the John, who was the medium of communication, to be the apostle. For such charges are not imparted by the Lord simply to the person, who is abstractly the first or best. They always rest upon an official basis. But the apostle John, according to the testimony of history, stood entirely toward those churches in that relation of unconditional authority, which these epistles evidently imply. Of special importance in this respect is Clement's account of the youth, quis dives T. II. p. 958, and in Eusebius B. III. c. 23. John was called in by the churches when matters of moment were to be decided, for which the bishop was not sufficient. As here to the angels of the seven churches, so there to the bishop he gives instructions and reproofs, and shows him, for his own justification, that the authority which he claimed is an unconditional one ; he speaks as a person who has absolute power and authority, and who judges by the most rigid standard. When he gives up the young man to the bishop, he says : " This person I commend to thee with all earnestness, and call Christ and the church to witness respecting it." On his latter return he again says to the bishop, " Bestow what I and Christ confided to thee in the presence of thy church." The bishop had done everything, as it appeared, to the youth, which could have

been expected of him. "He took him into his house, instructed him, kept him in order, and shewed the greatest regard to him." But before the judgment-seat of Christ and his servant John he does not stand the test: John, when he understood what had happened, "tore his garment, struck his head with loud lamentations, and exclaimed, I have given up the soul of a brother to a fine watchman." The narrative there also coincides with the epistles here, in that the bishop in the one place, as the angel in the other, is made responsible for all that was proceeding in the church. Finally, it serves also to confirm the result, which we have obtained from the words: John to the seven churches, that the series of the seven epistles begins precisely with that to the church at Ephesus, the place where John usually resided according to the uniform and well-established tradition.

This address of John, however, to the seven churches of Asia, is not more important for the author of the Revelation, than for the time of its composition. It does not square with the supposition of that being in the reign of Galba. Before the martyrdom of Paul John had certainly not come to reside in Asia Minor,[1] but in all probability did so on the occasion of the Jewish war, and the interruption thereby given to the operations of John in his native region. The Jewish war first began in the year 66. If the Apocalypse had been written under Galba, it would fall into the year 68. But this would not have afforded sufficient time to form the relation we find existing here. For the authority of John appears as one firmly established throughout an extensive district of churches, with the circumstances of which he was most minutely acquainted. He must previously have adapted himself to the Grecian culture, he must have visited the particular churches, some of which stood pretty far apart from one another (Ephesus, for example, being distant three days' journey from Sardis, according to Herodotus and Xenophon), he must have resided for a

1 Lampe, in his Comm on John Proleg. B. i. c. 3, § 12, says: "It is admitted that before the synod at Jerusalem he continued with the other apostles in Judea and its confines. Nor after this could he have lived there till the period of Paul's first imprisonment under Nero. The history of Paul's journeys, and the pains which he took in planting the church at Ephesus, where he remained three years, evince the contrary. Nor after the liberation of Paul (?) even to his death could John have been found at Ephesus, as he could not have omitted sending a salutation to him in his two epistles to Timothy. During the whole time that Paul traversed Asia no mention is made of John, and it is certain that Paul appointed Timothy as pastor of the church at Ephesus."

considerable time at each place in order to establish his authority, and must also have frequently returned to confirm it. No easy accomplishment, as appears from 3 John ver. 9, and one that as a whole could not have been pressed through in a very short time without something of constraint. A series of years must necessarily have elapsed before John could have named the seven churches in Asia *his*, and written to them in the way he does here. —Bengel remarks, "From the circumstance alone of the Revelation being sent, not to Judea, but to Asia, there is good ground for drawing the conclusion, that Jerusalem must already have been destroyed, as it does not appear that John removed before that period from Judea to Asia, to say nothing of his having been sent to Patmos." But this conclusion is rather hasty. It would only have been quite tenable if, as is still certainly supposed by Züllig, the fact of John's addressing the seven churches in Asia affords proof of the pre-eminent place belonging to these, is a declaration that they formed the then centre of the church. But if John wrote to them, because they constituted that portion of the general church committed to his direction, which is confirmed by the fact, that in the New Testament the limitations to a definite circle of readers always have their ground in the personal relation of the writer to that circle, taken along with the additional fact, that according to the testimony of history, John stood in a special relation to these very churches—then the conclusion falls to the ground. For such being the case, John might have written to the seven churches in Asia, even though the church at Jerusalem had still been in a flourishing condition. But it is another question, whether he might have left the church at Jerusalem before that catastrophe, and entered into a new relation to the churches in Asia. And it is certainly not probable that John would have left the theatre, to which his active energies had so long been devoted, without some call arising out of external circumstances. Had he been inclined to do so, he would have done it long before. Considering also the individual temperament of John, we shall scarcely deem it probable, that after the death of Paul he should have transferred the seat of his agency to Ephesus on a mere solicitation, as Dr Neander supposes (Apost. Zeitalter II. p. 615). The faithful retentive element is a fundamental feature in the character of John. Profound ardent minds are firmly rooted in

their Fatherland, and with difficulty adjust themselves to new relations.

Grace be to you and peace, etc. *Peace* is always the opposite to strife and war, to hostile pressure, whether the hostility proceed from God (Rom. v. 10, 11), or from the creatures. The great stress that is laid on peace in Scripture arises from this, that the life of believers is threatened by so many and diverse hostile powers. *Here* it is the less admissible to abandon the only certain special signification for a general one, as a violent outbreak of hostility against the church forms the starting-point, and all else in the salutation itself has some reference to it. For the same reason we must not think here of peace with God, but only of a safe position in regard to the world. Emphasis must be laid on the peace. For it was this that then drew around it all the thoughts of believers, who lived in the midst of strife. The grace, which in the Mosaic blessing also precedes peace, is the source of all the benefits belonging to believers, but peace that after which they then more especially sighed—comp. Ps. xxix. 11, "The Lord will bless his people with peace." There can be no doubt, that Paul's usual form of salutation is the foundation of that employed here by John. It was quite natural that John, when writing to churches, respecting which he had entered into the place of Paul, should have connected himself closely with that apostle by adopting his well-known and precious salutation-formula. Compare only the introduction of the epistle to the Romans, "Paul—to all that be at Rome, beloved of God—grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." With this the salutation before us entirely coincides in its leading features. The salutations of James and Jude are quite different. Peter's salutation in his first epistle comes the nearest to Paul's: "Peter to the elect strangers of the dispersion in Pontus, etc., grace and peace shall be multiplied unto you." This approach in Peter to Paul's form of salutation is in unison with the other resemblances to Paul, which occur elsewhere in Peter, as Peter also in writing that first epistle entered into the proper field of Paul's operations. Still, he wants what is uniformly found in Paul: from God, etc. The conclusion of the Apocalypse has also the greatest similarity to the epistles of Paul. There it is: The grace of Jesus Christ be with you,

here: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all saints. The deviation was required by the general purport of the book. It cannot be objected, that Paul never, like John here, prefixes his mere name, but always, even in his epistles to Timothy and Titus, sets forth his dignity. For that has already been done in ver. 1. And now a simple salutation, after the manner of Paul, appears here, but somewhat amplified according to the demands of the higher prophetic style, and in conformity with the necessities of the time, which were such as to call for a powerful consolation. From the depths of the nature of God and Christ there is brought forth what might strengthen an endangered faith, and raise a bulwark against the entrance of despair.

From Him who is, and who was, and who comes. These words are a description of the name of Jehovah. I have showed in my Beitr. II. p 230, ss., that this name, properly Jahveh (for the vowels belong to Adonai, which the Jews pronounce instead of it) has the meaning of the Being, absolute existence.[1] The idea of pure, absolute, unchangeable existence, it was there remarked, as expressed of Jehovah, is a quite practical one; that which God is comes into consideration only as conditioning what he is for his people. This appears at once from Ex. iii. 13—16. The people, in asking for his name, were to find in that a pledge and security for what was to be performed by God, for his wonderful help in the most distressing circumstances, not what should satisfy their metaphysical curiosity. The name Jehovah comprises in itself the fulness of all consolation, and the treasures thereof are here brought up from their depths and placed before the eyes of believers, the prophet's companions in tribulation. On the rock of the pure, unchangeable, absolute Being of God dash all the despairing thoughts of those who can call this God their own, as also all the proud thoughts of the world which has him for its enemy. "I am a worm and no man" can be said in

1 According to Delitzsch, in his Bibl. Proph. Theologie, p. 120, the name signifies the becoming, or going to be (der Werdende.) But this view is at once disposed of by the passage before us, as it would cut off "the who is and who was," and leave only "the who comes." So also by the original passage, Ex. iii. 3—16, since it cannot explain the *Ehjeh ascher Ehjeh* and point out its essential identity with the mere *Ehjeh*. The name by this explanation is merely evacuated. The *becoming* swims in the air, if it does not rest for its basis on the *being*. The becoming of God, too, is a thought quite foreign to the whole of Scripture, and has passed over into theology from the modern philosophy. God comes, indeed, but he does not become.

calm repose by such as can only look with an untroubled soul into this unfathomable mystery. As pure, and absolute, and unchangeable Being, God *is;* he exists in the fulness of that omnipotence which he makes subservient to the good of the church at the present time; he works, though in the depths of concealment, for her welfare, however circumstances may seem to indicate the contrary, and the world may triumph over the church lying in apparent helplessness on the ground, and bleeding with a thousand wounds He *was;* for he has given evidence of his being in the past by deeds of omnipotent love, as when he led the children of Israel out of the Egyptian house of bondage. He *comes;* for he will appear for the judgment of the world and for the salvation of his church, when the two shall be made to change places,—those ascending the throne who lay in the dust, and those who formerly occupied the throne thrust down to the ground. The stress should here be put upon the last clause, "he who comes."[1] In ch. iv. 8 the four living creatures constantly cry out, "Holy, holy, holy, is God, the Lord, the Almighty, who was, and who is, and who comes;" as much as to say, who, as by giving matter-of-fact demonstration of his Being in the past and present, he has proved himself to be the *was* and *is*, so will he also come to establish his kingdom over the whole earth. The inversion there (who was and is, instead of, who is and was here) shews that the expression "who is" here does not indicate the whole nature of God,—does not express, like the name Jehovah, his eternal, absolute Being, but is limited to the living efficacious tokens of his Being at the present time, for which the manifestations of his Being during the past afford a pledge. To the same result, also, we are led by the simple fact that along with the "who is" we have here on either side the two expressions "who was" and "who comes." In the original it is literally: from who is, and was, and comes. There was no room for flexion, because thereby the unconditional application of the three designa-

[1] The proof that the ὁ ἐρχόμενος is not synonymous with ὁ ἐσόμενος, as has been often affirmed, and still again by De Wette, is to be found in my Beitr., p. 239. I there pointed to the relation of the former expression to the ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν in ver. 7, to the ἔρχομαι ταχύ in xxii. 7, 20, ii. 5, iii. 3, &c., where the view of God's suffering and persecuted people is directed to the coming of God and Christ. Also to the dropping of the ὁ ἐρχόμενος in ch. xi. 17, after the *was* and *is*, because the future of God's kingdom had become present, the coming had come.

tions to the Lord would have been darkened, and also because the Greek has no participle preterite.

And from the seven Spirits which are before the throne. That the Spirits are the Spirits of God, appears from ch. iv. 5. The Spirit comes into consideration here, not according to his transcendence, but according to his immanence—not according to his internal relation to the Father and the Son, but according to his mission. This is indicated by the words: before the throne, here and in ch. iv. 5, and from ch. v. 6, where mention is made of the seven Spirits of God, that are sent forth over the whole earth. The designation of the Spirits as *seven* is not derived from Isa. xi. 2, where the subject discoursed of is not as here the active powers of the Spirit, but his productions or the properties he calls forth. It is taken from Zech. iv. 10, where the operations of the Spirit of the Lord appear under the image of the seven eyes of the Lord, that run to and fro throughout the earth—comp. on ch. iv. 5. The sevenfoldness does no violence to the unity, but merely points to the fulness and variety of the powers, which are enclosed in the unity, with reference to the manifold powers and agencies on the part of Satan and the world, which threaten the church with destruction (comp. xii. 3), as also with respect to the church's manifold straits and necessities, and perhaps to the seven number of the churches which constituted so many fields for the Spirit's efficacious working. The allegation of Lücke, p. 386, that there is here a contrariety to the Gospel of John, rests upon a misunderstanding: "While there all the different forms of the manifestation of Godhead are comprehended in the divine Logos, who diffuses himself as light and life in the world, and has become man in Christ, and is exhibited as oneness, here the manifestation of God is set forth in its organic variety as a sevenfold Spirit." That the sevenfold character of the Spirits is not fatal to the oneness of the Spirit, but rests upon the basis of this—that here respect is had only to the manifold manifestations of one and the same Spirit (comp. 1 Cor. xii. 4—7) appears from ch. ii. 11, xxii. 17, where simply *the* Spirit is spoken of. And that this Spirit, manifold in its unity, does not exist together with Christ, so that what is here attributed to the Spirit proceeds from Christ, is clear from this passage itself, as the seven Spirits are represented as employed in the service of the church of Christ, and still

more decisively from ch. iii. 1, according to which Christ has the seven Spirits of God, and on this account is almighty to punish or reward, and also from ch. v. 6, where the seven Spirits appear as the seven Spirits of the Lamb.

The Spirit is not "the Holy Spirit, who is the principle of all knowledge and enlightenment," for there is nothing said about that here. Both the starting-point and the connection lead us to consider it as mentioned rather in respect to its physical, than its moral operations. We are confirmed in this also by the parallel passages v. 6 and iv. 5, where the seven torches, which are the seven Spirits of God, make up, with the lightnings, voices, and thunders, the number ten. *The seven Spirits form here a mighty bulwark against despair, a compact phalanx, on which all the assaults of the world-power against the church shall break to pieces.* The seven Spirits press into the service of the church, delivering and helping, overthrowing and destroying, even to the remotest corner of the earth. No distress is so deep, no feebleness so great, that it may not with them be rectified. Even in Zech. iv. 6, 7, (where see the Christology), the Spirit of God appears as the power, which assists the feebleness of the church, and removes all the hindrances which the world throws in her way. The Spirit of God there carries the building of the temple to its completion in spite of all adverse machinations. It is the same Spirit that moved with creative energy on the waters of the primeval world, Gen. i. 2, "the source of life, from which creation draws its renovating powers, and without which all flesh withers, all life returns to dust, Job xxxiv. 14, Ps. civ. 29, 30." (Kahnis, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, I. p. 14.) It is that power, by which, according to Isa. iv. 4, God executes his judgments upon the earth. In the Gospel of John the Spirit is brought into view chiefly in respect to his moral and religious operations, in accordance with the evangelist's subject. And the same precisely is done here also in ch. xix. 10, xxii. 17, i. 10. The Spirit appears here, not less than the God of nature and Christ, as the well-spring of grace and peace. The threefold *from:* from him who is, &c., and from the seven Spirits, and from Jesus Christ, is deserving of notice in this respect, as it involves a position of equality. This implies a certain independence of the Spirit, beside the Father and the Son. The derivation of grace and peace

from the Spirit not less than the Father and the Son points to the adorable Trinity, and establishes a close affinity here between the Revelation and the Gospel of John. With this affinity other things concur. As here Christ is represented as having the seven Spirits of God, (ch. iii. 1, and v. 6), so in the Gospel the Son possesses not only the powers and properties of the Spirit (truth, life), but also the Spirit himself, (xvi. 14, 15, i. 33, iii. 34.) He is plainly subordinate, as to the Father who sends him, so also to the Son, since the latter also sends him, and since he does not speak of himself, but only what he hears (see Köstlin, p. 109-10.) There is a further point of agreement also in this, that the Spirit is predominantly viewed in respect to his operations outwards—comp. especially John vii. 39, where it is said, there was still no Holy Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Many of the older expositors, especially those belonging to the Catholic church, hold the seven Spirits here to be created angels, and identify them with the seven angels that stand before God, in ch. viii. 2. But the usage in Revelation is against this opinion, as there the angels are never called spirits; also the passage, ch. iv. 5, according to which the seven Spirits are the Spirits of God, ch. v. 6, where the Spirits appear as the seven eyes of the Lamb,[1] the fundamental passage in Zechariah, the impossibility of angels being put on a footing of equality with the Father and the Son,[2] and the circumstance, that Christ is first mentioned after the seven Spirits, which can only be explained on the supposition of essential equality, and that Christ was to be spoken of more at length. For otherwise the natural order would have been: Father, Son, and Spirit. Besides, there is no agreement with ch. viii. 2, excepting in the number seven. The seven angels *stand* there before the throne as servants; here, on the other hand, the seven Spirits *are* before the throne.

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness. A faith-

1 Vitringa:—"Certainly the seven eyes of the Lamb are something in the Lamb which cannot be separated from him, by which the Lamb sees and provides for his church, and which, as is there said, is immediately sent forth by the Lamb into the earth. But that holds of the Holy Spirit, not of angels."

2 Vitringa: "Who that properly considers the matter can persuade himself that John would solemnly implore grace to the churches from seven created Spirits, who could not of themselves bestow any grace, and that he would neglect to ask it from the Holy Spirit, who is the author and chief of all spirits, and verily has the power of bestowing grace; of whom mention is also made in ch. ii. 11?"

ful witness is a credible and veracious one (comp. Isa. viii. 2), who speaks what he knows and testifies what he has seen, John iii. 11. Christ is called a witness, because he does not teach at his own hand, but gives testimony to the truth that is in God, to whom all in the Revelation as in the Gospel is traced up as to its origin. (Comp. John iii. 32, 33). The fundamental passage is Isa. lx. 4, where it is said of Christ, "Behold for a witness of the peoples I give him, as a leader and lawgiver of the peoples." There just as here the witnessing is connected with the supremacy. The sphere of the witnessing, which of itself embraces the whole compass of doctrine and revelation—John xviii. 37, "For this end was I born and have come into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth"—is here limited by the circumstance that grace and peace are sought from Jesus Christ to the church. Accordingly, the testimony of Christ comes here into consideration only in so far as it has specially to do with grace and peace. The same holds also from the connection of the two other predicates, which declare concerning Christ what is fitted to inspire the desponding church with courage in the presence of the world. Respect is had to the glorious promises, which Christ imparted to his church even during his sojourn upon earth, and some of which have been preserved by John in his last discourses; for example, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," "I am with you alway even to the end of the world," "The gates of hell shall not prevail against my church." Such promises are expanded in this book, which discloses the testimony of Jesus Christ; but only when much tribulation is experienced in the world will they make their due impression on the mind.

And the first-born from the dead. The first-born in the Old Testament often occurs as another name for the first; for example in Isa. xiv. 30. That here the idea of priority in time and precedence in rank is what is taken into account, as in Heb. xii. 23, appears from Col. i. 15—18. There the first-born is explained by expressions, which are put as equivalent: who is before all, the head, the beginning, who has the pre-eminence. Accordingly, precedence in time and dignity is what alone can be understood to be indicated by the expression, and the figurative term of "the first fruits of them that sleep," in 1 Cor. xv. 20,

is substantially of the same import. That the passage before us does actually rest on Col. i. 18, "And he is the head of the body, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence," is clear from the following reasons: 1. The rather strange expression, "the first-born from the dead," is there only brought in through the preceding expression, "the first-born of all creation." The prefixed explanatory epithet, "the beginning," of itself intimates, that the mode of expression was somewhat peculiar. 2. There it is "from the dead," but here simply "of the dead" (the ἐκ, which is to be found in some critical helps, has only flowed from the passage in Colossians). The *from, out of*, points to the fact, that Christ was the first in moving out of the state of the dead. The simple, "of the dead," would scarcely have been used but for that other explanatory passage, according to which it is to be understood as meaning, the first among the dead, who have attained to life. Indeed, we have also, in 1 Cor. xv. 20, "the first fruits of them that sleep." But the immediately preceding words there, "but now is Christ risen from the dead," serves as a commentary, and shews in what respect Christ was the first-fruits, or the first among them that sleep. 3. The expression in ch. iii. 14, "the beginning of the creation," points back to the same in Col. i. 15; and indeed so, that "the beginning," which there comes into the place of the first-born, is derived from ver. 18. This reference is the more remarkable, as it occurs precisely in the epistle to the Laodiceans, who were very closely related to the Colossians.—Those who were brought to life again under the Old Testament and during the earthly ministry of Christ, were not then invested with immortal life, but only rescued for a few years from the domain of death. And even during that short period death gave continual proof of his power over them; they died daily.—He who, after the lapse of four thousand years, first actually attained to life, must have been possessed of an invincible divine power, which from him flows also to those who are his. And as he was thereby proved to be the conqueror of bodily death in the particular frame, that was united in corporeal membership with himself, so must he also be the conqueror of death to his church; this has with him for ever risen out of the grave. For death to the church, since his resurrection, is only a passage

to life. This is what from the connection we are here to make account of. John was not in vain in the spirit on the Lord's day. To Christ's life out of death he points the church, again also at ver. 18, as the pledge of her salvation.

And the prince of the kings of the earth. The fundamental passage is Ps. lxxxix. 28, where it is said of the house of David, which had its culminating point in Christ, "And I will make him my first-born, the highest among the kings of the earth." A comparison with ch. xvii. 14, "These will fight with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for he is a Lord of lords and a King of kings," shews that one is meant, who, notwithstanding their opposition, their bitter contention, reigns over the kings of the earth; one who is master of their pride, and casts their opposition to the ground. How he proves himself to be the prince of the kings of the earth, is rendered manifest to our view by the representation given of the overthrow of Rome, whose vassal king, so proud and yet so impotent, ventures to his own destruction into a foolish conflict with Him of life and death. It is still farther exhibited by the description of the battle of the ten kings and the victory over them in ch. xix. 11, ss., in which Christ appears with the name written upon his vesture and his thigh, "King of kings and Lord of lords." If Christ is the prince of the kings of the earth, how foolish must it then be to tremble and shake, whenever these kings make an assault against his church. Their end must be destruction, but the church through the favour of the prince of the kings of the earth *shall certainly reach* a condition of peace. "His princely title," says Bengel, "overtops the majesty of all earthly monarchs. The world, indeed, does not regard it; the most insignificant person will often dishonour this incomparable heavenly majesty with oaths and curses, with secure proud thoughts lessen and destroy it. But it will by and bye display its power; and the longer it withholds, the more terrible will it be to those, who would not submit themselves reverently to it."

"Now from this God, from this Spirit, from this Lord is grace and peace imparted to us; and in the glorious designations now considered there is contained the cause why God both can and will impart to us grace and peace."

There is now in the form of a doxology an indication given of

three other sources of consolation in Christ. First, *to him who loves us*—his love to us, which renders it impossible, that he should look with unconcern on our distress, and should not set his omnipotence in motion to bring us help. To fear and tremble in the midst of tribulation is to doubt of his love, and so, to rob him of his highest glory—to deny him what he has certified by so great and costly a pledge. To believe in his love, is to be sure of his salvation. The reading: who has loved us, ἀγαπήσαντι, which Luther follows, is the least supported, and has only come from the preceding: who has washed and made us. "Who loves us," includes "who has loved us," but at the same time expressly declares, what the other excludes, that the love waters the dry land of the present and the future, as it has done also of the past. Comp. John iii. 35, "The Father loves the Son, and has committed all into his hand;" where the "he loves" in like manner expresses the abiding love, and comprehends the past, the present, and the future [1]

The second ground of consolation in Christ is the glorious proof of his love, which he has already given believers to experience. *He who has washed us from our sins with his blood,* cannot suffer us miserably to perish, and give us up to the hands of the uncircumcised. Those, whom he has made righteous, he will also make glorious. "He who has not spared his own Son, but given him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things!" The *washing* marks the taking away of our sins by forgiveness, and the sanctifying power which has its root in this. That we must not exclude the latter idea, is clear from such passages as John xiii. 8, 10; 2 Cor. vii. 1; and also from ch. vii. 14 here, where the garments are said to have been made not *pure* merely, but *white.* The less approved reading: who has redeemed (λύσαντι) has arisen perhaps from mere accident, but also perhaps from the prosaic mind of the scribe. The reading: who has washed us, is supported by the poetical mode of contemplation, by the parallel passages of the Old Testament, in which sins appear under the image of impurity, their extirpation under that

1 Several suppose without foundation, that "who loves us" is put here for, "who has loved us." If John had wished to express this meaning, it would have been more natural to put ἀγαπήσαντι in unison with the following λούσαντι.

of washing and sprinkling (see on vii. 14), and also by a comparision of ch. vii. 14, and of John i. 7, "The blood of Christ makes us pure (equal to, washes us) from all sin."

And has made us a kingdom, priests to God and our Father —this points out the third source of consolation.[1] Instead of: a kingdom, priests, several MSS. read: kings and priests (*βασιλεῖς καὶ ἱερεῖς*.) Besides being better authenticated, the other reading is confirmed. 1. By the greater difficulty; 2. the greater resemblance to the original passage in Ex. xix. 6; and 3., the occurrence of "kings and priests" in ch. v. 10, whence it has evidently been imported here. That we are not to throw the two expressions, "a kingdom," "priests," into one, *q. d.*, a kingdom of priests, appears from the "kings and priests," in the parallel passage just referred to, which must be regarded as a commentary. Yet, that the kingdom and the priests cannot mark a double dignity, the one separate from the other, is shewn by the want of the *and;* on account of which the *priests* must be viewed as in apposition with *kingdom*. It also appears from ch. v. 10, where the words, "and they shall reign," *follows* the "priests;" from which it is clear, that the priestly dignity and the kingly are most closely connected with each other. The corresponding word "kings" in v. 10 shews farther, that the *βασιλεία*, kingdom, is used in a passive, not an active signification; that it is not the realm, but the dominion, as in xvii. 12, John xviii. 36. The kingdom is likewise employed in an active sense in the fundamental passage Ex. xix. 6, where the people of God are represented as a kingdom of priests, such a kingdom as is wielded by priests. The object of this ruling is the world. The people of God are, in consequence of their priestly dignity, appointed to govern the world. We have a commentary in Dan. vii. 27, "And the kingdom and the dominion, and the power over the kingdom under the whole heaven, is given to the people of the saints of the Most High." The idea

[1] In regard to the *καὶ ἐποίησεν* after two participles going before, there is weight in what Delitzsch remarks on Hab. p. 77, "According to the remark of Ewald, all the scattered shades of meaning in a verb resolve themselves again in the quiet progress of a discourse into the two primary colours of the perfect and imperfect. So is it also with the participle, through which the verbal idea receives a relative colouring. It is a part of the fineness of the Hebrew diction to make verba finita follow the participle that has the tone-mark, and these verbs, through the influence of the relative idea concentrated in the participle, are to be construed as conditional statements."

of this power over the world occurs also frequently in the Books of Moses; comp. Gen. xlix. 10; Deut. xxxiii. 26—29, concluding with the words, "And thine enemies shall feign to thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places." In the prophecies of Balaam also the ascendancy of the people of God, their absolute victorious power over the world, is the fundamental thought; comp. Numb. xxiv. 8, "He will eat up the nations, his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows;" but especially xxiv. 17, ss., and my work on Balaam there.

Even the Old Testament knows of an ideal priesthood beside the common one; comp. besides Ex. xix. 6, especially Ps. xcix. 6 (where the obligations only of the ideal priesthood are brought into notice, but the privileges correspond to these), Jer. xxxiii. 18, 22. In the higher style those persons only would be called priests who possessed the essential distinction of the common priesthood, though without its external accompaniments. But the heart and kernel of the priesthood is its close and immediate connection with God. Whoever has attained to this, he has, along with the priestly dignity, the spiritual priesthood, at the same time acquired the kingly. The essential element in this is the exercising of dominion. But if nearness of relationship to God possesses dominion in God over every thing except God himself as its necessary consequence, as certainly as God is the Almighty and the faithful helper of his people, he cannot suffer them to be overcome by the world. Comp. Is. lxi. 6, where the priesthood in relation to God, and the authority to rule in respect to the world, appear as immediately and inseparably united, "But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord, men shall call you the ministers of our God; and ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye be established."—From these distinctions the incorrectness of De Wette's remark becomes manifest, that the kingdom here denotes "the empire of God, the perfected holy blessed fellowship with God and Christ, in which all shall be united." Such a view, indeed, is annihilated the moment we glance at ch. ii. 26, 27, "And he that overcometh and keepeth my words to the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron," etc.; or iii. 21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his

throne;" or, v. 10, "And hast made them to our God kings and priests, and they shall *reign* upon earth;" or also xx. 6, xxii. 5. Such passages plainly shew, that the kingdom is an *active* one, and possesses a polemical character. And they serve, at the same time, completely to dispose of the remark of Ewald, that we must not think of dominion over others, but only of maintaining the Christian life in a quiet and independent condition. But it is not this, it is the supremacy of the world, which Christ has acquired for his people. It is further evident, from the distinctions drawn above, that Onkelos and Jonathan have not given precisely the right rendering at Ex. xix. 6 by: kings and priests; and also that the accusation raised by Ewald against John, of having misunderstood that passage, recoils upon its author. A kingdom of priests is a kingdom which is governed by priests as such. Finally, in what has been said, we have an answer to the question of the older expositors, how Peter should have happened, in his first epistle, ch. ii. 9, to put the kingly priesthood in the room of the priestly kingdom of Moses. For, we see there is no essential difference between them. The priesthood involves the kingdom, and the kingdom the priesthood.—Here, however, *the emphasis rests on the kingdom, and the priesthood comes under consideration only as the necessary basis.* The kingdom which Christ has acquired for his people was what, in the circumstances of the time, was fitted to console the dismayed minds of Christians. This kingdom was even then manifesting itself. Every heathen that was won over to the kingdom of God, every martyr who maintained with success the conflict with the world, was a proof of it. But, however important might be the conquests which were then in process of being made on the territory of heathenism, such were only a small pledge of the glorious realization, which should not reach its climax till the whole heathen world lay at their feet. A view of this royal priesthood and this priestly kingdom, and a spirit of fresh, undaunted courage before the persecuting heathen world, ought now to fill their bosoms. The more proudly the world lifted itself up, the nearer was it to its destruction.

To him the honour and the power for ever and ever, Amen. We can understand the words either as a wish (to him *be* these), or as a declaration. The latter mode of understanding it is coun-

tenanced by the parallel passage 1 Pet. iv. 11, "through Jesus Christ to whom *is* the honour and the power for ever and ever." The Amen is not against this view; for even in simple declarations this is used as an asseveration of the truthfulness of what is said. But even viewed as a wish the words can only be regarded as expressive of the destination to what is immoveably fixed. It is not a subjective wish, which would be properly in place here, but an unquestionable fact, on which anxious minds might erect and strengthen themselves. The honour in connection with the power is not the ascription of praise, but the glory. Christ's glory and might shall soon indeed pierce through the thin cloud, which now conceals his face from his church. As an antidote against pusillanimity and despair under suffering, Peter also points, in ch. v. 11, to the honour and the person of Christ. The agreement there with the passage before us is a perfectly literal one, extending even to *αὐτῷ*, to him, which here was not absolutely needed. And we can the less regard this as a matter of accident, since a leaning on Peter in the close of the salutation, whose doxology is imitated also in Jude v. 25, with an enlargement as here in ch. v. 13, corresponds to the leaning on Paul at its beginning. Such a leaning here was the more significant, as the epistle of Peter was also addressed to the churches in Asia. The chain-like connection of the later writings of the New Testament with the earlier, which is no more than the example of the Old Testament might have led us to expect, has hitherto received too little attention, or has even been made use of for false conclusions, as in regard to the first epistle of Peter in relation to the epistles of Paul.

After the salutation, and before he comes to the main subject, John still gives two weighty and appropriate utterances. With two torches he sends a gleam of light beforehand into the dark abyss of terror and dismay.

Ver. 7. *Behold he comes with clouds, and all eyes shall see him, and they that pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth shall wail over him. Yea, Amen.* John here looks back especially to Matt. xxiv. 30, "And then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth wail, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory."

And this declaration of our Lord again rests upon the two passages, Dan. vii. 13, "Behold one like the Son of Man came in the clouds of heaven," and Zech. xii. 10, "And I pour out upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they look upon me whom they have pierced, and they wail over him, as the wailing over an only one, and mourn over him, as the mourning over a first born." From the latter passage in particular is taken the expression, "They shall wail," and also "They shall see." That John had the declaration of our Lord more immediately in view, is clear from this, that here, as there, the two passages of Zechariah and of Daniel are united together. Still, John also reverts to the fundamental passages, and more literally adheres to them. Instead of: *in* the clouds of heaven, we have here, with a more exact reference to Daniel: *with* the clouds; and the clause derived here from Zechariah, "and they who pierced him" is omitted by Matthew. While in the declaration of our Lord both the fundamental passages are woven together, here the territory of both is still preserved distinct. The clause, "Behold he comes with the clouds," points to Daniel, the rest to Zechariah, the clouds with which, or accompanied by which, the Lord comes, are not "the symbol of glory, of elevation above all nature" (Hävernick), but they are the shadow of the judgment. This even in the Old Testament is the regular signification of the clouds, when employed in such a connection. Isaiah says in ch. xix. 1, "behold the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh to Egypt; and the idols of Egypt are moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt melts in the midst of it." On which Michaelis remarks: "This is to be understood of a dark stormy cloud, which is charged with thunder and lightning. *Swift* clouds must be particularly stormy." On Ps. xcvii. 2, "clouds and darkness are round about him," I remarked in my commentary, "The Lord appears surrounded by dark clouds, which announce his anger, and beget the expectation of a tempest of thunder and lightning breaking forth." Again on Ps. xviii. 10, when the Lord is represented as coming down from heaven, and having darkness under his feet, "The Lord approaches marching on the dark thunder clouds. These are to his enemies a sign of his anger, and a proclamation of his judgment." From these thick tempest-clouds break forth lightning, thunder,

and hail, ver. 11, ss. In Naham i. 3, it is said, "Behold the Lord, in storm and tempest is his way, and clouds are the dust of his feet."

The Lord does not come once merely with clouds at the end of the world, but through all periods of the world's history. Where the carcase is, there the eagles are gathered together. The truth, that the Lord comes with clouds, renews itself with every oppression of the church by the world. The opinion, which would confine the expression to an externally visible appearance of the Lord, is already excluded by the fundamental passages of the Old Testament. But of special importance for the right understanding of it is Matth. xxvi. 64, where Jesus says to the high priest, "But I say unto you, from henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." There the Lord comes upon the clouds to the judgment of Jerusalem, as a manifest proof that we are not to think merely of his coming at the last day, and that the words do not point to a visible appearing. There also the Lord does not come merely to the proper catastrophe on the clouds; he comes *from henceforth;* so that his whole secret and concealed agency towards the destruction of Jerusalem is comprehended under his coming. But if there the coming on the clouds refers to the judgment on Jerusalem, and here *primarily* to the judgment on persecuting Rome, then we obtain the result, that thereby the judicial activity of the Lord in its whole compass, according to its different objects and manifestations, is indicated.[1]—The coming of the Lord with clouds is at once terrible to the world, and joyful to the church; it is the latter which here comes into view. "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh;" it is written in Luke xxi. 28, after it had been said, "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

The fundamental passage of Zechariah treats properly of the

1 The right view was long since given by Vitringa: "Nor is it necessary that the words of John should be restricted to the last advent of Christ. For, Christ is said in Scripture style to come in the clouds of heaven, as often as he displays his glory, and shews himself as present to the church. And there are various gradations of that advent of Christ, in which he is seen by his hardened enemies themselves with the greatest anguish and lamentation."

penitential mourning of Jerusalem over the Messiah, who had been slain by its guilt. In respect to the relation of the passage before us, and of Matt. xxiv. 30, to that in Zechariah, it was remarked in my Christology: "These passages are a kind of sacred parody on that of Zechariah. They shew that, beside the salutary repentance of which Zechariah speaks, there is another Judas-like repentance of despair; that besides the free looking to him who was pierced, there is another not free, which it is impossible for unbelief to escape." The awful sublimity of this allusion must be felt by every one. Quite similar is Hab. ii. 14 in relation to Isa. xi. 9, "For full is the earth of the knowledge of the Lord, as the water that covers the sea." In Isaiah the knowledge of the Lord is a free, loving, joyful one; in Habbakuk it is one of constraint, terror, and howling. Bengel: "They shall wonder and be terrified, that this Jesus, formerly so despised, and even in his glory not known, should appear in such a manner. There are two kinds of looking to Christ, and wailing over him and his pierced condition. The one is penitential and tender, the other constrained and painful. They who in the day of grace exercise the former, as the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, give themselves to sincere and heartfelt lamentations for sin, which caused the death of Christ; and such shall be the case, when all the tribes of the earth mourn. So that there is no one, who shall not have mourned over the sufferings of Christ, either before the last day for his good, or at the last day (more correctly, when the time of judgment has come) with terror"—In place of "all the tribes of Israel" in the original passage, we have here, as in the declaration of the Lord, "all the tribes of the earth"—a clear proof that here, it is not, as De Wette thinks, the punishment of the Jews that is spoken of, with which also the church had little to do, when sighing under the heathen persecutions.

The expression, "who have pierced him," refers, according to the parallel passage, John xix. 37,[1] to the piercing with the spear.

1 It is an important ground for the identity of the author of Revelation and of the Gospel, that the latter also renders the original passage by ὄψονται εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέν τησαν, while the LXX. put it quite differently, ἐπιβλέψονται πρός με, ἀνθ' ὧν κατωρ χήσαντο. It was pointed out in the Christology, that they followed the common reading, but attributed to the verb דקר a figurative meaning (to pierce = to despise), because they regarded the common one as unsuitable. Inadmissible are the supposi-

"The piercing of the side," says Bengel, "was the last and most noted injury, which the enemies of the Saviour inflicted on his sacred body." But this piercing is considered here, not simply as the work of those, from whom in the first instance it proceeded. It appears rather as the common deed of those who are united with the proper doers of it by the common bond of a similar state of feeling, and who manifest it by what they perpetrate against Christ in his members. The immediate actors present themselves to the view of the prophet only as representatives of the multitude, who have feelings of enmity towards Christ. *Over him*, on account of what they have perpetrated against him, and what they have now in consequence to expect from him. The expression of affirmation in two words, *Yea, Amen*, serves, according to 2 Cor. i. 20, to give it additional strength. The double Amen in the Hebrew and in John i. 52, is analogous. Such a liveliness of asseveration was here perfectly in its place. For the visible presented a strong objection against what was affirmed. Bengel: "This is just the state of the Christian, that, when he hears of the coming of the Lord Jesus, he can look for him with joy, and in delight call out yea, with all who love his appearing and wait for his manifestation."

There follows now in ver. 8 the second introductory statement of what the prophet had to say for the consolation of the church in its faint and distressed condition. *I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, and who was, and comes, the Almighty.*—Luther follows here a double false reading. In a few critical helps, after the Alpha and the Omega, there is introduced

tions, by which some have tried to get rid of the consequences, that arise from the troublesome facts. Ewald's allegation, that the LXX. had originally translated as the others, but that the text had been corrupted, can only be regarded as the result of extreme necessity. The allegation, also, that the agreement might easily have been accidental, since Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, coincide with John here and with each other, is likewise quite untenable. For the coincidence is limited there simply and alone to the ἐκκεντέω, while here the ὄψομαι also is common; the LXX. and Theodotion have ἐπιβλέπομαι. Theodotion, too, not uncommonly leans on Aquila, Symmachus on Aquila and Theodotion—comp. Montfaucon Praelim. in Origenis Hex. p. 57. Aquila, however, knew the sacred books of the Christians, and was guided by polemical considerations in respect to them—as, for example, at Isa. vii. 14 he intentionally shunned the word παρθένος out of respect to Matth. i. 23, &c. But polemical considerations never stand alone. They always draw in their train also certain agreements. According to Epiphanius Aquila was for a long time a Christian; and an agreement with John in the rare ἐκκεντεῖν could scarcely be accidental.

from the parallel passages: the beginning and the end. In some also *God* is wanting after *the Lord;* a reading which has proceeded from the idea, that the person who speaks in the verse could be no other than Christ, to whom the title, the Lord God, is not applied.—The Alpha as the first and the Omega as the last letter in the Greek alphabet, denotes the beginning and the end. Corresponding to this is "the first and the last" in ch. i. 17, ii. 8. In ch. xxi. 6 the two expressions, Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, occur together; and in the full-toned conclusion at ch. xxii. 13, we have the whole three, Alpha and Omega, first and last, beginning and end. The fact that the beginning and the end never occur elsewhere but in connection with Alpha and Omega, while the latter, and the other expression also, the first and the last, are found alone, shews that "the beginning and the end" is only to be regarded as an accompaniment of Alpha and Omega. And these words are appropriated to this purpose, because they begin with the first and the last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and so fitly indicate in what character the Alpha and Omega here come into consideration—only in respect to their place in the alphabet. The speaker is not Christ, but neither is it God the Father in contrast to Christ (against this decides, besides the relation to ver. 7, the circumstance of the Alpha and the Omega being also attributed to Christ), but God in the undivided oneness of his being, without respect to the difference of persons. It may now be asked, in what respect God is here called the Alpha and the Omega? We are not to understand it of simple existence. For, then there would be no truth in the thought, that the personal existence preserves even the enemies by whom the church is brought into distress; and there could be derived from it nothing but a very small degree of consolatory power. The great question which then agitated the minds of believers, was about the superiority—whether the world would maintain the ascendancy, which it then claimed and seemed to possess; or whether it should belong to the God of the Christians. This question is answered by the declaration, I am the Alpha and the Omega. The emphasis is to be laid upon the Omega. It is as much as: I am as the Alpha, therefore also the Omega. The beginning is the surety for the end. The unconditional supremacy of God over the world, which is placed be-

fore our eyes by the Beginning, since God made heaven and earth, since he spake and it was done, commanded and it stood fast, is also brought again into notice by the end. If any one finds the end a cause of vexation, let him only lose himself in the beginning; let him dive into the word, "Before the mountains were brought forth, etc.," and his anxiety will disappear. Let the world enlarge itself in the middle as it may, the church knows from the beginning, that the victory at the end must be God's. The designations of God serve the purpose of tracing up to a necessity in the divine nature the declaration, that he will maintain his supremacy, as at the beginning, so also at the end. The epithet, Lord God, corresponds to the Old Testament combination, Jehovah Elohim, *i.e.* Jehovah the only God, the sole possessor of Godhead, Jehovah besides whom there is no God and no Saviour—comp. on Jehovah Elohim my Betir. II. p. 311, ss. The words that follow in the latter part of the verse unfold what is contained in the "Lord God;" and with a twofold respect corresponding to each: "Who is, and who was, and who comes," the substance of the Lord; and "the Almighty," the substance of God. The Old Testament Zabaoth,[1] which corresponds to it, serves along with Elohim to prevent all narrow views respecting Jehovah, all that would shut him up into a limited sphere. It was such a God, that belonged to the beginning, and such also must necessarily belong to the end; and the church can smile at those who would put themselves in opposition to him.

The Introductory section is followed by a narrative, ver. 9—20, telling how John had received from Christ the commission to write to the seven churches, and containing an extended representation of the appearance of Christ, which was admirably fitted to prepare the minds of men for the contents of the epistles—to dis-

[1] Bengel: In the books of Samuel and Kings, in Chronicles and Psalms, in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and most of the minor prophets, before the Babylonish captivity and after it, very frequent mention is made of the Lord God of hosts. The LXX. render the epithet variously, but most commonly use παντοκράτωρ, ὁ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτως. The word is nowhere found in the other books of the New Testament, excepting in 2 Cor. vi. 18, with an express reference to a passage in Isaiah. In the Apocalypse alone it frequently occurs. Such being the case, the Hebr. *Jehovah* cannot but answer to the third member, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. For the epithet ὁ παντοκράτωρ is never put, without either θεός or Jehovah immediately preceding.

pose sinners to repentance, and to kindle hope in the bosoms of the desponding.[1] It proclaims with emphasis at once, Fear, and Fear not.

Ver. 9. *I John, your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.* The "I John" is in imitation of Daniel's style, who alone among the prophets says, "I Daniel," vii. 28, viii. 1, ix. 2, x. 2. While John in this manner attaches himself to Daniel, he presents himself as having a similar position to his, and so indirectly designates himself as an apostle. For prophets standing on a footing of equality with the canonical writers of the Old Testament could only be found in the circle of the apostles. It is not accidental, nor to be explained from a mere subjective predilection, that John attaches himself in so very peculiar a manner to the last more eminent prophets of the Old Testament, to Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah. This is rather to be considered as having its ground in the serial character of the sacred writings generally, and those of the prophets in particular. As certainly as Scripture is no fortuitous assemblage, but an organic whole, John had the double purpose in view of connecting what he wrote at once with his New Testament predecessors, and with the last prophets of the Old Testament, whom in a sense he immediately followed as the author of the first and only prophetical book of the New Testament. John speaks of himself as the brother of those to whom he wrote. He might also have called himself their father, as in his epistles he addresses them as his children, 1 John ii. 1, 18, 28, 3 John ver. 4. But it was more fitting here to bring out the point of similarity, which is made sensible to the heart by nothing more readily than a common participation in suffering. Reference had already been made in ver. 1 to the distinguished dignity of John. The *also*, which many critical authorities shove in, has arisen from a feeling of solicitude, as if John must here have somehow indicated the distinction betwixt

1 The section partakes of the character of the whole first vision, which is thus described by Vitringa: "The first vision exhibits the *internal* state of the universal church through all times under the emblem of the seven churches of Asia, from ver. 9 to the beginning of ch. iv. Almost all the other visions have respect to the external state of the church."

himself and his readers.—The tribulation could only consist in persecution. For John, the companion in tribulation, is on the island of Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. Besides, the "Jesus Christ" belongs not merely to the patience, but to all the three, the tribulation, the kingdom, and the patience. But the question may be asked, what is to be understood by the tribulation of Jesus Christ? The answer is, that here, as in the fundamental passage of Col. i. 24, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my body what is still wanting (to me) in the tribulations of Christ," (John writes to the same circle of readers, and the whole verse before us is full of references to Paul's epistles):—in both alike, the tribulation denotes what Christ suffered partly in person and partly in his members, and what he still has to suffer. We must not with Luther think merely of the first, the personal sufferings of Christ: "Paul calls his own sufferings the tribulations of Jesus Christ, because they were the same sufferings as those by which Jesus Christ was affected. John designates himself a companion of the tribulations, which Christ had formerly suffered." In that case, Paul could not have called his sufferings tribulations of Christ without some farther explanation. And *here* the tribulation and the patience, or stedfastness, are manifestly the personal tribulation or stedfastness of John and of those to whom he wrote. A companion (*συγκοινωνός* only found in Paul and here in John) is one, who partakes along with others. But one cannot partake of the tribulation, which Christ himself has suffered. Had it been Christ's personal sufferings merely that was meant, the natural thing here would have been a mere compassion, which would not be suitable. The sufferings of Christ also in 1 Pet. iv. 13, are not merely the sufferings which Christ personally indured.

When we have determined the tribulation of Christ, we can no longer doubt what is to be understood by the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, the kingdom or empire of Jesus Christ can only be that which belongs to him, partly in person, partly in his members. In like manner, the patience of Christ is that, which he has personally manifested, and manifested in his members; and of explanations, such as Ewald's, according to which the patience of Jesus Christ must be the patient hope respecting Christ, require no further notice. Under the patience,

according to the remark of Bengel, is to be understood, "not only a good will, but a spiritual force and energy, whereby one is fortified to endure something, and bears up under it." It is the stedfast endurance of things contrary to the faith and truth of the gospel—comp. 2 Tim. ii. 12, where the patience stands in opposition to the denying, and Luke viii. 15, where those who bear fruit in patience are contrasted with those, who believe for a time, and in the time of temptation fall away. The same three things as here are united also together in Acts xiv. 22, where it is said of Paul and Barnabas, that they confirmed the souls of the brethren, exhorting them to *continue* in the faith, and that through much *tribulation* they must enter into the *kingdom* of God; comp. also 2 Tim. ii. 12, Rom. viii. 17. In regard to the order here, the tribulation, the state of humiliation, has placed in immediate connection with it the kingdom, the state of exaltation; and then the patience will be thought of with an emphatic N. B, because the contrast presented by it to the natural connection between the tribulation and the kingdom of Christ has been torn asunder, and the bitterly won fruits of the former reaped. The mention of the patience is at the same time a reminiscence, and an indirect though important admonition. Bengel: "The things mentioned are singularly woven together. The kingdom stands in the middle, the tribulation before, and the patience after. This is the form of Christianity in this life. Through the tribulation the kingdom is pervaded with the patience of Christ, till the tribulation shall have been overcome, and no more patience shall be required. With carnal men, who have not entered into the kingdom of Christ, tribulation brings no patience, but rather occasions impatience. A raging wild beast, if it is not irritated, may be quiet as a lamb, but when any thing has excited it, it breaks forth in its fury."[1]

From the words, "I *was* in the isle Patmos," the conclusion has often been drawn, that at the time John wrote the Revelation he was no longer in Patmos. And certainly the *I was*, if isolated, must appear remarkable, and cannot be explained by what was stated on ver. 2 in reference to the expression: who has testified. John

[1] The reading ἐν Ἰησοῦ has proceeded from those who could not understand the genitive, which has been much tortured by expositors. The fundamental passage is against it, as also ch. iii. 10.

could not take for granted that the sojourn in the isle Patmos, at the time when his book was being read, had already come to a close. But the abrupt beginning in ver. 10 shews[1] that we have here a mere Hebrew sort of connection between the clauses, which, with things that run into each other in meaning, simply puts them after one another: I was upon the isle Patmos, I was in the Spirit, for, when I was upon the isle Patmos, or during my sojourn there, I was in the Spirit. Comp. a quite similar synchronical Imperfect in Jonah iii. 3. So that there remains only the second *I was* to be explained. But the remark already made at ver. 2 is perfectly applicable here. The state of ecstacy was long since gone when the Book came to be read by the churches of Asia. That the Revelation in Patmos, besides, had not merely been received, but also written down, is evident simply from the *send* in ver. 11. Only an arbitrary disposition and want of simplicity could have sought to separate what are most intimately associated together. How the writing was immediately joined to the hearing and seeing, may be discovered from ch. x. 4, xxii. 7, 9, 10.—Instead of: on the isle, which is called Patmos, several have merely: on the isle Patmos. But the omission was made by those who had in view the renown which Patmos had acquired throughout Christendom by this very Revelation of John. That till then it was exceedingly obscure, is manifest, as Bengel has justly remarked, not only from the clause "which is called," but even from the designation of the place as an island, while in Acts xiii. 4, for example, we have simply the name Cyprus. Fiction would never have laid the scene in so obscure a corner.—The proof that the words, "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ," refer to the martyr-sufferings of John, has already been given in the Introduction. In regard to the testimony of Jesus, comp. on ch. i. 2.

Ver. 10. *I was*[2] *(there I was) in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet.* To be in the Spirit means being in the element and state of the Spirit. In a certain sense all Christians are in the Spirit, comp. Rom.

1 One might have expected καὶ with the second ἐγενόμην, but it is the very omission of this which serves to indicate the inseparable connection of the double ἐγενόμην.

2 The ἐγενόμην after the corresponding ἐγενόμην in ver. 9, not: I became, but I was.

viii. 5, 9, Gal. v. 25. But here by being in the Spirit is meant being so in the highest sense, in a theopneustic state, in which the natural life is entirely overcome. Parallel is Paul's being in a trance, Acts xxii. 17, comp. x. 10, xi. 5. Opposed is Peter's being again in or with himself γενόμενος ἐν ἑαυτῷ, in Acts xii. 11, which is immediately preceded by: forthwith the angel departed from him. In vain has Züllig denied that being in the Spirit could stand for being in a state of ecstacy. His exposition: I was on the Lord's day in a kind of transport, is at once put to flight by ch. iv. 2: and immediately I was in the Spirit, where he must explain: presently was I there in a kind of transport. John also is here not in the Spirit on the Lord's day, the day of the future judgment, but he speaks throughout from the stand-point of the actual present.—There can be no doubt that the declaration, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," primarily refers only to the first series, which is a whole by itself. Hence at the beginning of the second series we have the corresponding: I was in the Spirit, ch. iv. 2. It is naturally to be supposed, however, that the contents of the whole book were communicated on the same day. For the day of the Lord is, at least, quite as closely connected with the contents of the following visions. No other day is ever so much as hinted at. The half-hour in ch. viii. 1 is a measure of time, serving to indicate, that in the space of a limited period the whole was shut up. Zechariah also receives the entire series of his visions, which are formally independent of each other, in a single night.—The assertion, I was in the Spirit, is turned into a lie, whenever one assumes that the prophet had laboured long at his work. The word: he spake and it was done, applies also here. It is affirmed, that the book shews everywhere the marks of great art and careful preparation. But this is partly to be explained from the consideration, that in the state of ecstacy holy men were raised far above themselves, and must not be judged by a measure which is obtained from their ordinary condition. Then, much appears to us art, or even unnatural conceit, which was quite natural and easy to the sacred bards and seers, such as their arrangements according to symbolical numbers. In any other respect, the supposition of art and laborious preparation rests upon the arbitrary hypothesis of expositors, who have pressed their own conceits upon

the book, in particular have substituted in place of a series of visions, formally independent of each other, a single whole arranged after a regular plan. Finally, John's being in the Spirit was only the bursting forth for which a manifold and profound preparation paved the way.

The key to the right understanding of *the day of the Lord* is supplied by ver. 5, where Christ is called the first-begotten from the dead, and by ver. 18, where likewise reference is made to the resurrection as the pledge that he will quicken his people out of death. These passages prove, 1, That the day of the Lord is the day of the resurrection, as the day on which Christ was manifested above all others as the Lord, comp. Rom. i. 4. 2. That it was so named, not because of what the church should do on that day, but because of what the Lord did on it, as a figure and pledge of what he is still going to do on it.[1] It follows, however, from what the Lord has done on that day, that it is to be sanctified by the church, and that John so responded to this call, so yielded himself to the death-subduing power of Christ, as thereby to make himself capable and worthy of receiving the Revelation. The only point regarding which a doubt can be entertained, is whether, under the day of the Lord,[2] the weekly or yearly celebration of the resurrection is to be understood. Both were even in the apostolic age singled out from the rest. The reasons for the weekly celebration have recently been set forth by Weitzel in his Christliche Passafeier der ersten drei Jahrhunderte. Even on the very first weekly return of the resurrection-day we find the apostles gathered together, in remembrance of that which had taken place eight days before, if haply the Lord might again appear; and the day was distinguished anew by a manifestation of the risen Lord, John xx. 24—29. Paul, in 1 Cor. xvi. 2, singles out the first day of the week as that on which the Corinthians were to lay past their contributions. On the first day of the week we find the Christians met at Troas to celebrate the Supper, Acts xx. 7. Exactly seven days before had Paul arrived there: he would a second time observe the sacred day in the midst of

1 Augustinus: Dominicus hic dies ideo dicitur, quia eo die dominus resurrexit; vel ut ipso nomine doceret, illum diem domino consecratum esse debere.

2 The name was certainly in John's time not in common use, but was first introduced by him; perhaps, the Lord's day was formed after the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. xi. 20.

them. The proof that the annual celebration of the day of the resurrection was also observed in a solemn manner from the first age, has likewise been produced by Weitzel. This follows, indeed, as a matter of course: the celebration of the weekly festival is hardly to be conceived without that of the yearly. Farther, from the connection of the oldest churches with the Jewish synagogue, there was only the choice left of keeping a Jewish or a Christian holyday. And finally, from the fully accredited tradition of an observance by John in regard to the Christian Passover, it appears on the most credible testimonies that the Passover-feast peculiar to Lesser Asia was introduced there on the authority of John. The knowledge possessed by the ancient church of the internal connection between the resurrection of Christ and his second coming, led to a particularly energetic celebration of that yearly festival.[1] Beyond doubt, Easter day was a very suitable one for receiving the Revelation, the fundamental idea of which is that Christ will come to deliver his church from death. However, since it is certain that the weekly commemoration of the resurrection had then begun, every one must naturally think of that, when he hears of the day of the Lord, and the yearly festival could not have been designated in this simple manner, but must have had some mark of distinction, as it is called by the Fathers the holy, the great, the splendid day of the Lord. "On the Sunday," says Bengel, "John received the Revelation, and a spiritual meditation of this book is truly Sunday work." It is the proper Sunday-book. Every Sunday, if spent under its influence, will awaken in us the hope of the Maranatha, which is so full of consolation especially for our times.—John hears behind him a voice. This took place because he must *first* hear. Had he immediately seen, he would not have been able to hear, but with a "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell among a people of unclean lips," he would have fallen prostrate on the ground; comp. ver. 17. But here the reference to the church must presently come forth.—The great

1 Jerome on Matt. xxv.: Dicamus alquid quod forsitan lectori utile sit. Traditio Judaeorum est Christum media nocte venturum in similitudine Ægyptii temporis, quando Pascha celebratum est exterminator venit.—Unde reor et traditionem Apostolicam permansisse, ut in die vigiliarum Paschae anti noctis dimidium populos dimittere non liceat, expectantes adventum Christi; et postquam illud tempus transierit, securitate praesunta festum cunctis agentibus diem.

voice is as of a trumpet. Allusion is made to the Old Testament use of the trumpet as the sign for calling the people together, and intimating, that the Lord had something to say to them; comp. Numb. x. 2, Ex. xix. 16—19, Joel ii. 1, where in the immediate prospect of the day of the Lord Israel is called by the sound of the trumpet before an angry God, ii. 15, Matt. xxiv. 31, 1 Thess. iv. 16, where the trumpet calls the members of the church before the Lord at his second coming. So here also the voice of the trumpet announces that the Lord has important tidings to communicate to his church, and summons them straight to his throne, that they may there receive the word of warning and consolation.

Ver. 11. *Which said: What thou seest write in a book, and send it to the churches in Asia, to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.* Between *spake* and *thou seest* several critical helps have introduced, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last." But Bengel has conclusively shown in his Appar. that these words have been derived from ver. 8 and 17. Züllig would still defend them as genuine; but a glance at the beginning of his defence, "These words are wanting indeed in the best manuscripts," renders it quite unnecessary to follow him farther. Where the external grounds are so decided, it is not worth while going more deeply into the internal considerations, which might be found to show the want of genuineness. We shall make but one remark, that it is only at ver. 12 that John turns round to look after the voice which spake with him, consequently he could not yet know who the speaker was. The words would weaken the impression of the appearance and the surprise it occasioned. John must write what he sees, not what he may yet see. The seeing has already begun; for according to the Biblical usage the hearing also is comprehended in the seeing in the larger sense. On the words *in a book* Bengel remarks, "Therefore all here makes up but one book. Not only is the address to each particular church to be sent to the angel of it, but the whole book is also to be sent to them all." But this remark would only be right, if we were to understand by the *all* what is written to the end of ch. iii. For this portion alone belonged specially to the seven churches of Asia. Ewald's attempt

to delete the "seven," on the ground of a few unimportant manuscripts omitting it, and indeed with little advantage, since the book still remains specially directed to the seven churches of Asia, whether they might be expressly said to be seven or not, only shows to what difficulties they reduce themselves who understand by the book here the whole book, which from ch. iv. to the end bears an entirely oecumenical character. The name of the book (*βιβλίον*, properly, little book) affords no handle to this mistake. For, in ch. v. 1, we find the book with the seven seals; in Matt. xix. 7 the same word signifies the writing of divorce; in 2 Sam. xi. 14, 2 Kings xix. 14, it is used of letters (Suidas: *βιβλίου ἡ ἐπιστολή*), and in Macc. i. 44 of edicts. The corresponding Hebrew סֵפֶר denotes any sort of written declaration. The law of the order of the seven churches, the seven, as is clear from ch. ii. and iii., falling into three and four, may with certainty be discovered. Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos must stand together, and be separated from the rest. For, these three cities and these alone contended for the primacy in Asia.[1] The order in which they are placed here is also not arbitrary. Ephesus must stand at the head as the seat of John's labours, and as such forming the centre of the whole circle. From Ephesus it proceeds northward to Smyrna and Pergamos. Then from Pergamos as the most northerly point it goes in a regular south-easterly direction down by Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, to Laodicea, which lies almost in the same parallel of south latitude with Ephesus, but considerably farther east.[2] The apostle in his spiritual visitation takes the same course which he was wont to take in his actual visits (comp. 2 John ver. 12, 3 John ver. 10.) When John wrote to the seven churches, he had in his eye the example of the seven Catholic and the fourteen Pauline epistles (including the epistle to the Hebrews, which anyhow, even if not directly, flowed from Paul as its source.) That John was instructed to *send* to the churches, shows, notwithstanding the objections of Lücke, p. 243, that he wrote out what he saw on the spot. That "the state of the seven churches of Asia appears as immediately present in the

[1] See the the Appendix in Spanheim, de usu et praestantia numismatum I. p. 636, ss.

[2] In the Itinerarium Antonini the four cities follow each other in precisely the same order, comp. Cellarius Schwärtz II. p. 113.

seven epistles," indicates nothing to the contrary, for that belongs to the territory of the Spirit.

Ver. 12. *And I turned round to see the voice which spake with me. And, when I turned, I saw seven golden lamps.* The *seeing* is to be taken in the larger sense. He wished to learn more exactly about the voice, namely from whom it proceeded. That his desire lay especially upon the latter point, is evident from the turning of his head. This does not need to have been a mere visionary turning (Mark). The internal sense moves after the form of the external. John sees first the churches and then Christ. By this it is implied, that he beholds Christ here only in a special respect, in his relation to the churches. That the seven churches are indicated by the seven lamps, is expressly declared in ver. 20. Among the furniture of the sanctuary there was a candlestick with seven lamps, Ex. xxv. 37, which already appears in Zech. iv. as an image of the church.[1] It is not accidental that here seven individual lamps are set before us. The candlestick with the seven lamps could not have been admitted here. For this since the time of Moses had been consecrated for all times as a symbol of the whole. But here the discourse is not of the whole church, but only of seven articular churches, in which the church was reflected indeed, though they still did not constitute the church—(comp. ver. 20, where the seven lamps are said to be

1 Comp. the Christol. on Zech. iv. We believe we must here repeat what was said in the Beitr. III. p. 645 regarding the import of the candlestick: "As regards the candlestick, we have a sure starting-point in the oil. The oil throughout both Old and New Testaments is the symbol of the Spirit of God. But when we have determined the oil, we can easily determine also the candlestick; as the bearer of the Spirit of God it can only import the church, the covenant people. So also the light; it can only indicate the operations of the Spirit of God, the spiritual light, which streams forth from the Spirit-endowed community into the surrounding darkness. The symbol in the first instance declares what the church of God is, in the event of its corresponding to its idea, but along with this, at the same time, what it *ought* to be. The description carries in its bosom a call. This comes distinctly out in the explanation of the symbol, which our Lord himself gives. After saying in Matt. v. 14, "Ye are the light of the world," he adds in ver. 16, "Therefore let your *light* shine before men." Besides, the Saviour again has respect to the candlestick in Luke xii. 35, and in the parable of the virgins. So also Paul in Phil. ii. 15. The seven number of the lamps points to the covenant relation. Seven is in Scripture, as the language itself bears evidence, the number of the oath, and consequently of the covenant. That the candlestick was of gold denotes the glory of the church of God. The blossoms of flowers, which were added as ornaments, were emblematic of the church's joyful blossoming and prosperity."

the seven churches; not the church at large, but seven individual churches selected from the whole. Without any proper right has Hoffmann (Weiss. und Erfullung, Th. II. p. 319) drawn from the passage before us the conclusion, that the seven churches of Asia must have had a symbolical character, a prophetical import, since otherwise they could not have been represented through the symbol of the whole church. But this is just what has not been done. The seer has avoided that supposed identification of the seven churches with the church at large, by not speaking of the candlestick with the seven lamps, but of seven separate lamps. But under the image of seven lamps even seven individual believers might have been represented, as may be seen from Phil. ii. 15, and the parable of the ten virgins. Certainly the seven churches constitute one whole, for they have Christ in their midst, but only a whole of the kind described in the words, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"—a separate section of the church, which stood under the superintendence of John, not the whole of the Christian church. Hoffmann has said, that any one who would see the matter more fully proved, will find in Vitringa all he can wish. But the reasons which have been advanced by the latter are equally untenable. He rests, first of all, upon the general contents of the entire book. According to ver. 1 it contains what was shortly to come to pass. Whence the seven epistles also must be out and out prophetical, which can only be the case if the churches are understood to be types of the church of the future in its varied conditions. But what holds of the book in its general character and import, must not simpliciter be applied to every particular part. The first introductory and preparatory series must, according to the express declaration of ver. 19, be occupied with "what is," as previous to and apart from that "which was afterwards to come to pass"—with a prophetic insight into the real state of matters in the churches of Asia, which was known only in a superficial way to common observation, and still unperceived in its proper depth. In this, what is said of the contents of the book in general, receives its limitation so far as the first portion is concerned. "Must then," continues Vitringa, "the churches alone of the Lydian Asia have lain upon the heart of Christ, and not rather the churches of all Asia, nay

the churches of the whole world?" For this reason he thinks those churches of Asia must have had a symbolical import. Unquestionably, the seven epistles addressed to them form part of a book, which is destined for the whole church. But nothing more follows from this, than that they also partake of the character attributed in 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17, to the whole of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and without which indeed, holy Scripture cannot be conceived to exist: "All Scripture given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for all God's works." But our epistles bear this character, even if we give up their prophetic import in the narrower sense, and place them in the same rank with the other apostolic epistles, which likewise refer originally and primarily to special relations. In both cases alike it is the part of the church by means of its theological expositions to extract from the particular, the general, and again make application of this to the particular. The seven churches are no more representatives of all other churches, than were the churches to which the other apostles wrote. "What then," asks Vitringa, "are the churches amongst whom Christ the Lord walks? Are they just those seven churches of Asia, or are they not rather all churches of all times and places?" But the walking of Christ among these seven churches is to be taken positively, not exclusively. One might just as well conclude, that the two or three, in the midst of whom the Lord has promised to be, must represent the whole church. When Thomas calls Christ his Lord and God, John xx. 28, or when Paul says, that Christ lives in him, Gal. ii. 20, no one surely will maintain, that they could only speak thus as types of the church. Finally, Vitringa still lays stress on the point, that the Lord concludes the epistles to the churches in Asia with a call that is addressed to all churches: he that has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. But this very circumstance shews, that the churches in Asia do not represent the whole church. Had they done so, the Spirit would simply have needed to address *them*. That there was only a special application and charge made to them of what, we are expressly told, belonged to the whole church, was purposely designed to teach, that they were only parts of this great whole. But against the

strictly prophetical character of the seven epistles, there is also this very decisive fact, that they do not at all contain a full representation, even in its main features, of the state of the entire Christian church. It is especially to be noted in this respect, that of the two grand hostile forces against which the Christian church has constantly to contend, Judaism and Heathenism, standing related to each other as a false slavery and a false freedom of spirit, here it is only the latter which is brought into notice, and simply because this alone had then power and influence in the churches, to which the apostle wrote. Those persons, especially, who like Vitringa descry in the seven epistles a prophecy of the seven ages of the church,[1] must by this consideration be reduced to great straits. For, among these ages there are some, in which the Judaistic element has wrought the greatest devastations in the church. But those also, who perceive in the epistles a pre-intimation of the church's states in the last times, cannot easily dispose of this argument. For, Judaism has a very tenacious existence, and will assuredly never altogether abandon the field to heathenism.

Ver. 13. *And in the midst of the seven lamps one who was like a Son of man, who was clothed with a long robe, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle.* Bengel: "Just as Christ in heaven has not in himself the actual form of a lamb, or of a warrior on a white horse (vi. 2, xix. 11), so, though he has indeed the human form, yet he has not that precise fashion of it, in which he here presents himself with so much splendour as the head of his church." The appearance here stands in the closest relation to the matter in hand. It presents before our view those aspects of Christ's nature, which were adapted to the seven churches, and to all who are placed with them in similar states and circumstances, on the one hand to bring them to repentance, and on the other to fill them with consolation and encouragement. What he afterwards says to them in word, he prefigures to them in the first instance through his appearance—the regular relation of appearance and word to each other in the sacred Scriptures—so that the appearance bears throughout a onesided character. His glori-

[1] In opposition to which this alone is decisive, that, as already indicated, the order in which the seven churches stand, was determined by local considerations and others of a like outward nature.

ous majesty, and his punitive righteousness, these are the aspects which here alone were to come distinctly into view, and these alone beam forth on us from the following description.—Christ appears in the midst of the seven lamps as the guardian and the judge of the church. The expression, "like a Son of man," refers to Dan. vii. 13, "Behold upon the clouds of heaven came one like a Son of man," and so, immediately suggests the most elevated representations. For to that person was there given the dominion, the honour, and the kingdom, and all peoples, nations, and tongues serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which does not pass away, and his kingdom has no end. In the expression itself there is involved a superhuman elevation. For, if he was only *like* a Son of man, there must have been another part of his Being, which far surpassed the human. The whole succeeding description serves as an explanation of the *likeness* to a Son of man, for every thing in it points to a superhuman nature and glory. With Christ the designation of himself as the Son of man had an apologetical import: be not offended at my human lowliness of form, but remember that the Son of God in Daniel had the appearance of a Son of man. Some, with an unseasonable remembrance of the expression as uttered by our Lord in the days of his flesh, understand by the Son of man precisely Christ himself; and explain the *like* by supposing that Christ himself did not personally appear, but as Bossuet expresses it, "an angel under his form, and sent by his command." Expositors of the Reformed Church have made use of this exposition in support of their party views.[1] A personal appearance of Christ here appeared to be dangerous to their doctrine of the Supper. But it is decisive against such a view, that here, as in ch. xiv. 14, it is not said, "like the," but "like *a* Son of man."—The robe, or garment, flowing down even to the feet, was not the sign merely of sacerdotal, but also of kingly dignity—comp. Isa. vi. 1, where such a garment is represented as belonging even to king Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts. The whole of the following description exhibits Christ as king and judge, as was done also by the original passage from which the expression, "like a Son of man," was

1 Mark: Homo Christi lineamenta Johanni bene cognita referens. Neque enim Christus ipse quem coelos capere oportet usque ad judicii diem, descendit in terram, sed speciem sui similem exhibuit Johanni.

takn. "A king," says Bengel, "is more exalted than a priest." Hence Scripture also, and in particular the Revelation, speaks much oftener of the kingdom, than of the priesthood of Christ, even as he was not Aaron's, but David's Son." Both the long robe and the golden girdle have respect to Daniel x. 5, where it is said of Michael or of the Logos (see on ch. xii. 7), "And I lifted up mine eyes and saw, and behold there was a man clothed in linen,[1] and his loins were girt about with pure gold." That the girdle is called golden in regard to its buckle, is clear from 1 Macc. x. 89, xi. 58, xiv. 44, where the bearing of a golden buckle on one's girdle, along with being clothed in purple, appears as the mark of royal state. In respect to the phrase: about the breast, Bengel remarks, "One who is busy girds himself about the loins, Is. xi. 5. But he who girds himself about the breast, must be in a state of dignified repose. Jesus by his sufferings and death has overcome all, and so he now presents himself in his glory as one girt about the breast. What profound reverence should fill our hearts before this incomparable majesty!" Yet we can scarcely ascribe this meaning to the being girt about the breast. It was hardly to be expected, that a material deviation from Daniel should appear in the description. Christ, besides, appears here not in a state of rest, but of full activity. According to ch. ii. 1, he *walks* amid the seven lamps. The seven angels also in ch. xv. 6, while employed in active service, are girt about the breast.

Ver. 14. *But his head and his hair were white as white wool, as the snow, and his eyes as a flame of fire.* The mentioning separately of the head and hair, while in Daniel mention is made simply of the hair of the head, is to be explained from the contrast in respect to the feet in ver. 15—comp. 2 Sam. xiv. 25, where it is said of Absalom, that מִכַּף רַגְלוֹ from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." In ver. 13 we have the clothing, in ver. 14 and 15 the uncovered parts. The fundamental passage for the first half, is Dan. vii. 9, "I beheld till the thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days sat down, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head as fine wool." The blinding whiteness of the hair (the addition,

[1] The בַּדִּים plural, not linen clothing generally, but a long linen garment.

"as snow," supplies the idea of glittering splendour), denotes not the untarnished purity of Christ, which would be out of place here, where he appears to encourage and to frighten, but his holiness, majesty, glory, to which also we are led by the connection in which it stands with eyes like a flame of fire. Comp. upon whiteness as the colour of serene splendour, the symbolical representation of glory ch. iv. 4. John xvii. 5, "And glorify me, O Father, with thyself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," corresponds as to meaning. The second half rests on Dan. x. 6, where it is said of Michael, the Logos, "His body was as Tarsis, his countenance like the lightning, and his eyes as torches of fire, and his arms and his feet like burning brass." According to this passage, by the eyes like a flame of fire, is denoted neither the power of vision or the omniscience of Christ, nor his beauty, but only the energetic character of his punitive righteousness, in accordance with the common symbolism of Scripture, which uniformly employs fire as the image of anger. For in that passage the eyes as torches of fire appear in the midst of warlike accompaniments, between the countenance like lightning, and the arms and feet like burning brass, ready to destroy everything that comes in their way. We are led also to the same result by a comparison of the other passage in Daniel vii. 9 which forms the basis of the first half. After the words already quoted, it follows there, "His throne was pure flame of fire, and its wheels burned with fire;" comp. ver. 10, "A stream of fire went out from him." The Lord appears there to execute judgment on the world. His holiness and glory, shadowed forth under the colour of his clothing and his hair, shews that no one can escape out of his hand. His punitive righteousness imaged by the flame of fire shews that he possesses the energetic will to punish his adversaries. A similar combination of holiness and anger represented under the image of fire meets us in the descriptions given by Ezekiel, i. 27, viii. 2, of the Lord when appearing for judgment. The parallel passages also in the Revelation itself shew that the eye as a flame of fire is the eye sparkling with indignation; that from it streams forth the fiery zeal, which shall consume the adversaries (Heb. x. 27) as well within as without his church; so that there comes forth the admonition, Be afraid, and also, Be not afraid. In ch. xix. 12

the words, "and his eyes are as a flame of fire," are followed by, "and in righteousness he judges and makes war;" while in ver. 15 he is represented as "having a sharp sword going out of his mouth." In ch. ii. 18, eyes as of a flame of fire, and feet like burning brass, are united together, and both appear as the ground at once of threatening and of promise to those in Thyatira. Woe to those who have against them him whose hair is white as wool and as snow, and whose eyes are as a flame of fire. Happy they who have him on their side. Though the whole world should be leagued together against him, he can laugh them to scorn.

Ver. 15. *And his feet like clear brass, as if they glowed in an oven, and his voice as the sound of great waters.* On the first half Bengel says: "This has respect to his great power, with which he brings all under him, as with a bar of metal, which at the same time is burning hot, one can give a very powerful thrust. Oh, how will he tread down all his enemies!" Clear brass, in the sense of heated brass, Chalkolibanos, is an enigmatical term, formed by John himself in a peculiar manner. For which reason the words, "as if they glowed in an oven," are added by way of explanation. And hence these words, being merely of an explanatory character, are wanting in the second passage, where the Chalkolibanos occurs, ii. 18.[1] After the de-

1 There can be no doubt that the Chalkolibanos corresponds to the Nechoshet Kalal of Ez. i. 7, where it is said of the Cherubim: "And they sparkle (in the feet) as the aspect of Nechoshet Kalal;" and in Dan. x. 6 it is said of Michael: "And his arms and his feet like the aspect of Nechoshet Kalal." In this expositors agree, only several suppose that Chalkolibanos at the same time corresponds to the Chasmal, חשמל, in Ez. i. 27, while they quite improperly identify this with the Nechoshet Kalal; see the proof given of the complete difference at ch. iv. 3. If, therefore, we would determine the signification of Chalkolibanos, we must in the first instance settle that of Nechoshet Kalal. This properly signifies clear or light brass. But in the two passages this is used not in the sense of shining brass, but of brass in a glow-heat, as was perceived by the old translators, the LXX. ἐξαστράπτων, Vulg. aes candens, Chal. aes flammans, Peschito fulgurans. That we must *think* not of *glittering* brass, but of brass in a glow-heat, appears, 1, from what precedes in Daniel, "and his face was as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as flames of fire." 2, By comparing the passages in Ezekiel, ch. i. 27, viii. 2. "From the loins and under there was seen as the appearance of fire." 3, By the נצצים in Ez. i. 7, which signifies not glittering, but emitting sparks, scintillantes. With this result, which we have obtained by a comparison of Nechoshet Kalal, agrees the explanatory clause, "as if they glowed in an oven;" and also that other, "his feet are as pillars of fire," in ch. x. 1. Having thus ascertained the sense, we shall not need to be in doubt as to the derivation. The only legitimate derivation is that from χαλκός, brass, and לבנה, whiteness, here used of the whitish glitter of much heated brass. לבן, according to Buxtorf, means albare, album, candens, ignitum reddere, candefacere; לבן

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scription of the more important features, there follows now what else seemed worthy of notice in the appearance—the voice, what he had in his right hand, and what proceeded out of his mouth, last of all his countenance like the sun, far transcending the splendour of the stars in his right hand. The voice, from the connection is that with which he chides his enemies whether within or without the church, and which for them utters the thundering and destructive cry, Thus far, but no farther. "The voice as the voice of many waters," is from Dan. x. 6, "and the voice of his words like a great clamour," coupled with Ez. xlii. 2, "And his voice was the voice of many waters." Comp. also Ps. xcii. 3, 4. The world-power breaks forth like a tempestuous sea; but more glorious than the sea with its swelling waves is the Lord in the height, and he loudly utters his voice.

Ver. 16. *And had seven stars in his right hand; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his face shone as the sun in its strength.* In accordance with the uniform symbolical usage of the Revelation, the stars denote rulers; comp. upon the stars as symbols of a ruler's greatness and glory, at ch. vi. 13, xii. 4. By the explanation given in ver. 20 the seven stars signify the overseers of the seven churches. The representations of these under this symbol certainly accords ill with the view of those, who maintain the democratic character of the Christian polity. "Pure society-officials, whose authority flowed from no other source than that of the church itself," who "were simply the church's presidents and nothing more," could not possi-

metallorum in igne candefactio. Examples of similar bastard-words are given by Bochart Hieroz. III. p. 900, Lips. The supposition of such a peculiar composition is here attended with the less difficulty, as the fact of the words nowhere occurring except here and in ch. ii. 18, places it beyond a doubt that John had formed it, and as the appended explanation also shows, that it was of an enigmatical description. Accordingly a quite ordinary derivation, such as that of Hitzig, who has revived the old exploded opinion that χαλκολίβανος stands for χαλκοκλίβανος, has the presumption not for, but against it. In the formation of χαλκολίβανος we are presented with a small image of the innermost nature of the Apocalypse. The singular manner in which the Hebrew and the Hellenic are fused together in it, proved anciently a stone of stumbling to the existing theology of the Greek church, on which many actually fell. Those whose calling it is to reveal the secrets of God, delight sometimes to stamp on their productions, even in the individual and the external, something of a mysterious, enigmatical character. In Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, not a little of this is to be found. Even the Gospel of John, and it alone among the Gospels, presents something similar to this; for example, Sychar for Sychem in ch. iv. 5: see my Beitr. II. p. 25.

bly have been represented under the symbol of stars. This quite plainly betokens a *power over the community*, as does also the circumstance, that generally a double symbol is given for the rulers and the spiritual community, which strangely disagrees with the view now so much cried up; and still further, the strength and greatness of the charges, which are given in the epistles to the rulers, which necessarily imply the elevation of their office. For only to whom much is given, can much be required of them. It is equally at variance with the view now currently entertained, what Paul says, in Acts xx. 28, to the elders of the church of Ephesus: "Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God," if only it is viewed with an unprejudiced eye, and not in the light of this present time, which is so much averse to all restraints both of law and authority. That Christ has the stars in his right hand, marks his unconditional power over them. No one can deliver them out of his hand, when he will punish; but no one can pluck them out of his hand, if they remain faithful. Comp. John x. 28, 29, "And I give to them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and no one can pluck them out of my Father's hand." That we are not in a partial manner to lay stress merely on the *protection*, is clear from the two-fold respect in general that the descriptions of Christ bear. In ch. ii. 1, the words, "who holds the seven stars in his right hand," must lay the foundation for the threatening in ver. 5 not less than for the promise in ver. 7. But ch. iii. 1 is quite decisive, as there threatening and judgment greatly preponderate.—Out of his mouth goes a sharp two-edged sword. This is an image, not of the saving efficacy, but of the destroying power of the word, which proceeds from the Almighty. It denotes the resistless energy of Christ's power in punishing his enemies, alike internal and external. This is clear from ch. ii. 12, compared with ver. 16, where the two-edged sword is directed against the false seed in the church, and from xix. 21, where it brings destruction to the antichristian heathen power. The proper fundamental passage is Isa. xlix. 2. There, the servant of the Lord Christ says, "And he has made my mouth like a sharp sword," q. d.

he has invested me with his omnipotence, so that my word, like his, brings irresistible destruction to my enemies. Comp. li. 16, where the Lord says to his servant, "I put my word into thy mouth" (I endow thee with my almighty word), "that thou mayest plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth (mightest bring in an entirely new state of things, a total revolution, mightest introduce a well-ordered instead of a disordered world), and say to Zion, Thou art my people" (mightest raise the church from the dust of humiliation to a state of glory). Besides this undoubted allusion to the Old Testament fundamental passages, there is also, as appears, a reference to Heb. iv. 12, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, and is a judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart."[1] The word of God, by which he excludes sinners of the present day from salvation, and dooms them to destruction, as he once did those of former ages (comp. 5) is not a dead, impotent word, a mere threatening, but such an one as immediately carries its fulfilment along with it; according to that, "He spake and it was done." By the sword being represented as going out of the mouth of Christ, or by the destructive power being attributed to his mere word, he appears as one possessing divine power. For it belongs to God to slay with the word of his mouth, Hos. vi. 5; in the Wisdom of Solomon, God's almighty word is described as a sharp sword, which fills all with death; and the same subject is discoursed of in Heb. iv. 12. Other expressions are used to describe Christ's participation in this divine prerogative, in Isa. xi. 4, "And he smites the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he slays the wicked," and in 2 Thess. ii. 8, which refers to that passage in Isaiah. Woe to the Seven Stars, if they have against them Him out of whose mouth proceeds a sharp, two-edged sword! But happy if he stands on their side! They shall then no longer faint before the world, however formidable may be the attitude it assumes against them! A glance to the sharp, two-edged sword, and they are filled with consolation!—The face

1 It is only in these two passages that the expression μάχαιρα δίστομος occurs in the New Testament. Nor is there any passage of the Old Testament which is related in thought, like Heb. iv. 12, to the one before us.

of Christ[1] is as the sun shining in his strength, when no clouds, vapour, or damps, veil his splendour in the clear sky. On the sun as a symbol of the glory of the Lord, see on ch. xii. 1. That the visage is here first thought of, can only have arisen from the respect had to the stars, which pervades the whole description of Christ's appearance. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars," 1 Cor. xv. 41; and as the splendour of the sun is to that of the stars, so does the glory of Christ immensely transcend that of his servants in his kingdom. In ch. xii. 1, also, the sun and a crown of stars are put together. Bengel: "In the visible world there is no brightness like the sun's. A person born blind, who in other respects was richly endowed, declared that he would be content to be blind, if he could only see the sun for a little, as he had heard such wonderful things of it. We are in the constant habit of seeing this glorious body, but we cannot fail to regard it as pre-eminently an image of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the days of humiliation and suffering, his face was spit upon, struck, treacherously kissed; but now it is full of brightness. This King shall we sometime see in his beauty, and consequently shall be like him."

Ver. 17. *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead, and he laid his right hand on me, and said: Fear not.* John understands the twofold aspect of the appearance, recognizes that the glory of the Lord and the energy of his righteousness have the church as well as the world for the field of their operations, and, forgetting his prophetical office, penetrated by the feeling of his personal sinfulness, sinks overwhelmed to the ground. But He, who once also in the days of his flesh, when he was transfigured before his disciples, and his countenance shone as the sun, and they fell upon their face and were greatly afraid, had in so gentle and powerful a manner touched them and said, "Arise, and be not afraid" (Matt. xvii. 6, 7), the same here also laid hold of his servant. Bengel: "Before the sufferings of Jesus, John enjoyed such confidential intimacy with him, that he lay in his bosom during the feast of the last Supper; and now, scarcely

[1] That the ὄψις is to be taken here in the sense of face, is plain from the parallel passage, ch. x. 1: Καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος. John alone in the New Testament uses ὄψις, and both here and in the other passages, Gospel xi. 44, vii. 24, only in the rare signification of *face*.

sixty years after, was this elder, this aged apostle, so overwhelmed with a look. What a brightness must there have been in the appearance of the Lord!" How deep, we add, must the conscience of daily sin also be in the very holiest! That John, when he saw Christ, fell down at his feet as one dead, forms a practical commentary on his words, 1 John i. 8, "If we say, we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." That Christ laid his right hand upon him and said, "Fear not," in this is found a proof of the truth declared in the words that immediately follow, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and purifies us from all unrighteousness." Had John not been free from reigning sin, and truly penitent in regard to his sins of infirmity, he could not have received the comfort of the address, bidding him not to fear. Under the Old Testament, such immediate intercourse with heavenly beings, even with angels (Dan. viii. 17, 18, Luke ii. 10), but most of all with the Lord and his Revealer, especially when he appeared in his glorious Majesty, filled with a profound terror the minds even of his holiest servants. The fervid appearance of the Lord's glory which Isaiah saw, ch. vi. (comp. ver. 4, "And the house was full of *smoke*, from the fire on the golden altar), primarily had respect, not to him, but to the ungodly people to whom he was going to be sent as a messenger of wrath. Yet even he cried out on beholding it, "Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Ezekiel, in ch. i. 28, falls upon his face when the Lord appears to him in his burning glory, although the indignation was kindled not against him, but against incorrigible sinners, comp. iii. 23, xlii. 3. Daniel falls down, ch. viii. 17, 18, when Gabriel comes to him, in utter impotence on the ground, but the angel touches him and raises him up again, so that he is able to stand. But Dan. x, 7, ss., comes nearest to the passage before us. Daniel falls on the ground when he sees Michael, the angel of the Lord, in his burning glory, "and lo! a hand touched me and set me on my knees, and on my hands." In regard to the laying hold here with the right hand, what Hävernick has remarked on that passage of Daniel is quite applicable: "As the result and object of the touching with the hand, we have not merely to think of the rais-

ing up of Daniel, which always presupposes a strengthening that had already been experienced, but the entire agency of the angel as manifesting itself in beneficent working toward Daniel (attactus sanitatem et vires conferens, Geier), of which the outward touch is to be regarded as the symbol." Bengel says: "In former times the Lord Jesus had healed much sickness, and strengthened much weakness by the laying on of his hand, and in the same manner he imparts here to John a plentiful supply of living energy. How gently and graciously was this done to John!"

Ver. 18. *I am the first and the last; and the living, and I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of hell and of death.* After the fear had been removed from the Seer, he is directed to the consolatory and elevated import, which the appearance of the Lord of glory has for him and for the church he represents, the care and burden of which he bears upon his heart, whose microcosm he in a manner was. Fear not, but rather hope, be confident and rejoice, for, etc. Three glorious predicates meet us here, which are each fitted to inspire a joyful hope, the first and the last, the living, the possessor of the keys of death and of hell.—The expression, "I am the first and the last," is used in Isaiah three times of Jehovah, xli. 4, xliv. 6, xlviii. 12; and three times also in this book of Christ, comp. ii. 8, xxii. 13. That it expresses what is included in full Godhead, appears from Isa. xliv. 6, "I am the first and the last, and besides me there is no God." That his being the *first* refers to the creation of the world, is clear from Isa. xlviii. 13, where the word is explained by "I, my hand has founded the earth, and my right hand has stretched out the heaven, I call to them and they stand forth together." *I am the first*—for in the beginning was the Word; all things have been made by him, and without him was nothing made that was made, John i. 1—*and so I also am the last*: all that has been made shall at the end lie at my feet, and no one that abides in me needs to vex himself about it; comp. on ch. i. 8.—*The living* is also a peculiarly divine predicate, and especially, *he who lives for evermore.* The latter is used in ch. iv. 9, 10, x. 6, of the Most High God on the ground of Deut. xxxii. 40. Purposely and intentionally, everything is in the Revelation attributed to Christ which belongs to the Supreme God, in order to exhibit the truth that he is equal to God in

power and glory. The living is at the same time the life-giving; comp. on ch. vii. 2. "If Christ lives, what can trouble me?" Christ himself said in John xiv. 19, "I live and ye shall live also." His life is the pledge to his church that she cannot remain in death.—That Christ had been dead, so far from subverting the truth, that he is the living and the life-giving, is rather a security for it. His life has the more gloriously manifested itself by the victory over death in the resurrection. And for his church it was through his death and his resurrection that he first properly became the source of life.—Christ has the keys of death and of hell. He opens and no one shuts, he shuts and no one opens, according to ch. iii. 7, and Isa. xxii. 22, "And I give the key of the house of David upon his shoulder, and he opens and no one shuts, and he shuts and no one opens." By virtue of his absolute power of the keys he shuts death and hell for his people, that they may not go thither; he opens them for Satan and his servants, and thrusts these down thither, comp. ch. xx. 1, ss. From the connection only that kind of death can be thought of which is a real evil, and the object of fear. But this bodily death in itself is not according to the New Testament point of view. We are led to the same result also by the connection of death with hell, Hades. In the Revelation, and generally, Hades is brought into notice only in respect to *dead sinners*; see on vi. 8. This renders it manifest, that natural death is here to be thought of not simply in itself (since it may even be a great good, a passage into life), but in so far only as it is the punishment of sin and is associated with the second death. From this Christ keeps his own by keeping them stedfast amid the trials and persecutions which Satan and the world bring upon them, so that they are not tempted above measure.—Bengel: "To these descriptions, contained in ver. 13—18, the titles of our Lord in the epistles to the seven churches refer, especially those in the four first. Still, there is much in the description which is not expressly repeated in the titles, and much again in the titles, especially in the four last epistles, which is not to be found in the description."

Ver. 19. *Write therefore what thou hast seen, and what is, and what shall be done afterwards.* The *therefore*, which is wanting in Luther, is the connecting link with ver. 11: Since

therefore thy fear has been removed, do what I now enjoin thee. Bengel: "After John had been raised up, the command to *write* was with emphasis repeated, and the discourse of our Lord, which had been interrupted, was continued." The execution of that command is to be understood as first taking place at the end of ch. iii., after John had fully received the commission. Bengel says: "When this was uttered, John immediately wrote what with us forms the first chapter. The second and third chapters were afterwards dictated to him." But according to this view the description of what John saw would not be connected with the salutation. John must first write what he *saw*. It is this which we find written in ch. i. 11—18. He had seen the Lord as light and as fire in his surpassing glory and in the glow of his fiery indignation, rich in help for his own people, threatening destruction to the world as hostile to God and Christ, and to the unfaithful among his professing people—had seen also the seven stars in his hand, and the seven golden candlesticks, in the midst of which he walked.—He must further write what *is*. He must unfold the internal state of the seven angels and the seven churches, as is done in the seven epistles. This also is an important object of prophecy, with which the holy men of the Old Testament occupied themselves as much as with the unveiling of the future. The *reality* of things is not less concealed from the natural eye than the future. Loadicea said, "I am rich and have need of nothing, and knew not that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." "If you all prophecy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth" (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.)—John, finally, must write what *shall be done afterwards*. This is the second part of the contents of the seven epistles. Along with discoveries of the real state of the churches, these contain announcements of the coming of the Lord, threatenings against the insincere, promises to those who should overcome, all in close connection with the condition of the particular angels and their several churches.—The explanations of the verse that deviate from the one now given rest upon the supposition, already proved to be erroneous, that we have here the introduc-

tion to the whole book. They all agree in conceiving the words before us to contain the plan of the entire Apocalypse. But the groundlessness of this supposition can be easily pointed out. First, in ver. 11, it is said, "What thou seest, write in a book." Here, on the other hand, "What thou sawest, and what is, and what shall be afterwards." The command here is a resumption of the command in ver. 11, as the *therefore* plainly shews. So that all the three things named here must be comprehended under the description there of "What thou seest." What was already seen were the seven lamps with the Lord in their midst, and the seven stars. The things described as being, and as going to be hereafter, cannot be referred to the indeterminate, but must be understood of the object of the seeing, and through this reference must receive their more immediate determination, and their inclusion in the "what thou seest" of ver. 11. The word must point to the present state of the lamps and stars in their relation to the Lord and their future fate. *Then*, it is only in the view now adopted that ver. 20 fits properly in to the preceding context. It drags behind in a quite unsuitable manner, if in the words, "what is and what shall be done afterwards," the reference to the lamps and to the stars is given up. To these considerations we may still add the special reasons, which are furnished by the other explanations. Bengel and others refer the things which John saw to ch. i. 11—18; the "what is" to the seven epistles; the "what shall be hereafter," to ch. iv. 1 onwards to the end of the book. But the "what is" would very imperfectly indicate the contents of the epistles. These are taken up, in their promises and threatenings, with that also which shall be hereafter. Besides, the epistles represent "what is" not generally, but only in respect to the seven churches. But if we derive here the limitation from the preceding context, then we must also limit the import of "what shall be afterwards." Finally, it is against the reference of this last clause to the portion iv. 1 to the end, that we have there an entirely new beginning, new in respect to the state of inspiration and new in respect to the scene. Still weaker is another exposition:- "what thou hast seen," ch. i. 11—18, what (it) is, what is thereby signified, and "what shall be done afterwards," ch. iv. 1—22, v. The necessity for shoving in an *it* is alone a proof of the arbitrariness of this mode of expla-

nation; and then the contrast, what thou sawest, and what it is, is a strange one. John had seen nothing else than *spiritual* lamps, and *spiritual* stars. The *are* suits well, comp. ver. 20, but not in the sense in which it is here taken. The what is, and the what shall be done afterwards, also plainly form a contrast—the present and the future that is yet to be developed out of it. Lastly, according to this exposition, the very thing would be passed over in silence, which comes out so prominently in what follows, the reference to the present state of the churches. The whole meaning of the epistles is destroyed by it. These receive the character of a non-essential intercalation, to which no respect is had in the plan.

Ver. 20. *The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden lamps. The seven stars are angels of the seven churches, and the seven lamps are seven churches.* John must write the mystery of the seven stars, and what in respect to them is now and shall come to pass afterwards. For only when this should have been written, would the mystery of the seven stars be fully brought out. We should know little of them if we merely learned what is said of them in the preceding description. Ch. ii. 1, ss., is but a specializing of the command, which is given here generally; not: and write further to the angel, but: write therefore. The explanation: the seven stars are, etc. by this view comes in quite naturally and easily. The words "the mystery—golden lamps," are not put as if for the purpose of attaching thereto the explanation, so that they perform the service merely of a peg. They are necessary in order to determine more exactly the sphere of the "what thou sawest, what is and shall be done afterwards," and cutting off for the *attentive* every kind of false meaning. By mystery, secret is always meant in the New Testament (see for example Matth. xiii. 11, Eph. v. 32, and here ch. x. 7, xvii. 5, 7), "the great secrets which only God's Spirit can unfold"—the things and doctrines which are plainly inaccessible to the natural man, which cannot be apprehended excepting by fellowship with the Triune God and on the ground of his internal and external Revelation. It belongs to the nature of a mystery, that even after its objective revelation it should remain beyond the apprehension of those, who have not opened their heart to receive the Holy Spirit;

as, in spite of the revelations given by John, the fleshly and impenitent in the seven churches still continued to grope on in darkness in regard to the stars and the lamps, entertaining concerning them the most earthly and superficial views. The mystery never consists of things, in which the difficulty is of a merely *formal* nature, and capable of being removed by an explanation. Such would be an enigma, but no secret. Accordingly, the mystery of the seven stars, and of the seven lamps, was not described or made known by the following explanation, but by the communications, which are contained in ch. ii. and iii.—by the discovery there given of the most concealed depths of the heart, and the disclosure of the future, in regard to which mere natural knowledge is involved in the strangest illusions. The formal explanation of the stars and the lamps, which immediately follows, is only to be regarded as a sort of hasty sketch, serving to introduce and prepare the way for the more extended illustration of the secret which is given in ch. ii. and iii.—In this formal explanation the question first of all arises, whether the discourse is of angels or of messengers of the seven churches. The ἄγγελος of itself can signify both; but there can be no doubt we must render: the seven stars are *angels* of the seven churches. In support of this there is, first of all, the fact that this word, which so often occurs in the Revelation, is always found in the sense of angel. Then the connection, in which in the Old Testament stars and angels not rarely occur, as forming together the heavenly hosts of God—comp. for example, Ps. ciii. 20, 21. Further, when we explain here: the angels of the churches, we have no room to doubt from whom the sending proceeds; the angels are God's messengers, the angels of the churches could only be the angels whom God had sent to the churches, and had intrusted with the charge of them. Comp. Matth. xviii. 10, "See that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels do always behold the face of their Father in heaven;" according to which the angel of any one is the angel to whom the charge of him is intrusted; Acts xii. 15. But, on the other hand, the messengers of the churches could only be those whom the churches themselves had sent or their commissioners. We must then, with Vitringa and those who have followed him, think of an office in the Christian church, analogous to that which had

existed in the Jewish, that of שלידי צבור, the deputies of the church. Bengel was drawn into this opinion, and remarks, "There was in each of the seven churches, which were doubtless planted after the Israelitish stem, a single president, who was named by the Hebrews the angel or deputy of the church, and who by virtue of his office represented the church." But this opinion, into which Vitringa was betrayed by his zeal for making out the parallel between the Christian and the Jewish constitution of the church, appears on every account untenable. There is no trace to be found elsewhere of such an office having been transferred to the Christian church. The historically known presidents of the early churches had nothing to do with the "deputy of the churches." The place of the latter was quite a subordinate one, that of a mere clerk to conduct the devotions of the congregation. The symbol of the stars, which indicates an authoritative power over the churches, would have been altogether unsuitable as a designation of such a person. The angels or messengers of the churches appear throughout the seven epistles as the soul of these. But this "the deputies of the churches" were not at all, at least not as distinguished from the churches themselves, which are here indeed represented under a separate symbol, that of the lamps. Contradistinguished from the churches, which were represented by them, they had next to no importance. If, then, we must not think of "the deputies of the churches," but only of the messengers of God to the churches, we must translate: the angels of the churches. But the further question arises: *Is the name of God's heavenly messengers merely transferred to his earthly ones, or are real angels meant?* Were we to adopt the former opinion, then we could understand the object of the transference to be, to bring clearly and prominently out the principle *from above*, to remind the president of the dignity of his office, of the responsibility of his position, and the solemnity of his account. The idea of such a transference may the more readily be adopted, as we find also in the Old Testament undoubted examples and specimens of it. In Eccl. v. 6, "Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin (by uttering a vow which thou hast not strength to fulfil); and say not before the angel, It is an error (think not, that thou canst undo the evil by an easy, It is an error); wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands?"

There the priesthood is denoted the angel, in order to mark his high dignity and the impropriety of any thing like levity in his presence. He stands as God's representative, comp. 2 Cor. v. 20, and the LXX. and the Syriac have precisely: before God. We must not render: before the messenger, for one knows not then, whose messenger. The angel, implies that the sending is of God. In Mal. iii. 1, "Behold I send my messenger before thee," it is better on account of the reference there to Ex. xxiii 20, to translate, "Behold I send my angel," than "Behold I send my messenger." From the subject it is impossible that any thing but an *earthly* messenger can be meant, the prophet, the whole band of divine messengers who should prepare the way for the appearance of the Saviour, and herald the approach of the kingdom of grace (see Christology on Mal. iii. 1.) But the name of the *heavenly* messenger was employed to designate the earthly, that the grace of God, the supernatural origin of the provisions connected with salvation, and the dread responsibility of rejecting what was to be provided, might be more distinctly brought into view. If we must, therefore, translate, "my angel," which is also justified by the relation of the angel there to the angel of the covenant in what immediately follows, then we must understand of the angel of the Lord what is said in ch. ii. 7, 8, "For the priest's lips must keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the angel (commonly, the messenger) of the Lord of Hosts." For, the two passages stand closely related to each other. And if in these three passages the messenger must give way to the angel, so in Isa. xlii. 19, we should also translate, "Who is blind but my servant, and deaf as the angel, whom I send?" in Isa. xliv. 26, "Who fulfils the word of his servant, and executes the counsel of his angel;" in Hag. i. 13, "And he spake to Haggai, the angel of the Lord, in a message of the Lord to the people"—the rather so as מַלְאָךְ, in so far as it is used of divine messengers, elsewhere always denotes only angels.

The other opinion, that in the passage before us real angels are meant, has recently been defended by Züllig and De Wette. The angel must be the guardian angel of the community, "as in Daniel every nation has its ruling angel, and according to the Rabbins an angel is placed over every people." "But always,"

remarks Züllig, "are these angels in the mind of the poet himself nothing more than imaginary existences, and prosaically considered they are simply the personified communities themselves." And De Wette also thinks that as to meaning the angel is the spiritual community, or the spiritual substance of the community, "so that one may say with Arethas, the angel is just the community or church itself." We must, however, decide entirely for the *first* view, for the transference of the mere name of the angel to the overseers of the several churches. Against the view, which would understand it of real angels, and of these as figurative personifications of the churches, important considerations have been urged by Rothe (Th. I. p. 423): "There would therefore be one image or symbol used to express another, and the stars would be the symbol of a symbol. Besides, the angels and the churches would stand immediately beside each other, and of both it would be spoken in one and the same sentence, that they are to be understood under the symbols of the stars and the lamps; yet of these two symbolized objects must one only be a reality, and the other a mere symbol! And not only so, but this symbol be the symbol of the reality placed in immediate juxtaposition with it!" We add, still another consideration. No valid objection can be urged against the supposition of angels as purely ideal forms. Such ideal beings unquestionably occur in this book itself, in ch. xvi. 5, where mention is made of the angel of the waters in a figurative sense; in ch. xiv. 8, where the angel who has power over fire is spoken of; in ch. xxi. 12, where the idea of the Lord's protecting guardianship over the new Jerusalem is viewed as embodied in the twelve angels that stand at its gates. To these passages may be added ch. v. 4 of John's Gospel, which has proved so great a stumbling block to prosaic copyists and expositors, in which the symbolical mode of contemplation breaks forth in the midst of the simple narrative of facts, such as could only be expected with the Seer among the evangelists. But if the Seer introduced here such purely ideal angelic forms, it could only have been as embodiments and personifications of the power of God as exercised in behalf of the churches. Angels, however, as they are here considered beings of a higher sphere, to whom epistles are addressed, who are partly rich and partly poor, partly stedfast, partly

lukewarm, partly admonished to be faithful, and to repent, who have a local habitation (ch. ii. 13), who, as the admonition to be faithful unto death presupposes, could die—such are a nonentity for which not the least analogy is to be found in Scripture. Against the supposition that angels are personifications of the churches, it may further be stated, that the symbol of the stars is alone decisive, a symbol which does not fitly apply to the churches, but only to the presidents; as also the praise which is bestowed on the angel of the church of Ephesus on account of his contendings against false teachers—a feature which only suits those who had the charge and oversight. There are other things also tending in the same direction, such as the wife of the angel in Thyatira, Jezebel, which will come under consideration when we reach the particular parts.

There is still a third question, whether under the angels of the churches single individuals are to be understood, bishops according to a wide-spread opinion, or rather the directorship in these, so that the angel, though in each case formally but one, still denoted in reality a number of persons. We must here decide for the latter view. It has on its side the passages already quoted from the Old Testament, in which, by the ideal person of an angel, the whole body of priests and prophets is denoted. But still more decisive is the argument that, by referring it to a single individual, the bishop, one cannot be right as to the grounds on which several expositors, from Salmasius downwards, have sought to shew, that between the angels and the churches no material difference could exist. The position of an individual, however important it may be, is still not of such a kind that through his person the community might be so immediately addressed, that he might so unconditionally be considered as its soul, and their repentance or their fidelity be regarded as so dependent on his. If, on the other hand, we understand by the angels the whole church officers, all without distinction who were set apart to the service of the church, this difficulty entirely disappears. Let it only be considered how John, in the narrative formerly given, makes the bishop responsible for individual souls, how Paul, in Acts xx. 28, regarded the elders of Ephesus as those on whom the spiritual state of the church entirely depended, how he calls

them to lay to heart the high responsibility of their office, so that only if they watched, tended, admonished every one day and night with tears, could they be pure from the blood of all men. Let the language also be compared, in which Peter in his first epistle, ch. v. 1—5, writes to the elders as "ensamples of the flock." We must not, however, stand merely at the college of the elders, the presbytery of 1 Tim. iv. 14, as Polycarp begins his epistle to the Philippians: "Polycarp and the elders that are with him, to the church of God which dwells at Philippi," but, on the ground of what is indicated in ch. ii. 19, we must also add the deaconship, as Ignatius, in the superscription of his epistle to the Philadelphians, says, "especially if you are at one with the bishop, and the presbyters and deacons that are with him." If the angels are considered thus, the passage ch. ii. 5 can easily be understood, "Repent; else I will come to thee quickly, and remove thy lamp out of its place." If all that hold office in an organized church have become degenerate, the church itself must have sunk into a low condition, and every thing be ripe for judgment.—As to the question regarding the age of episcopacy, nothing certain can be obtained from what is said here of the angels. Whether we have to think of the state, which presents itself to us in Acts xx., as still continuing,—a college of presbyters on a footing of equality, or whether a bishop with more or less of superior power already stood at the head, we have no sufficient data for determining.—In conclusion, we must throw some light upon the view which has been set forth by Rothe, I. p. 425, "We have here, in fact, already the idea of an individual personality, in which the manifoldness of the church comes forth as in its true common expression and life-organ, as in its proper concrete oneness, and attains to its united consciousness; in short, we have the idea of the bishop though this idea had not yet found its realization—the bishop was still only a purely ideal person." On the other hand we remark, that this connection of an idea and of a real existence, lamps or churches, would certainly be of a very rare description. Christ must then have had seven ideas in his hand. By snatching at this idea the real church officials would be left out of account. And then what was said against the actual bishop must equally hold against the ideal one: the identification of the angel with the community would be inexplicable, if by the

former a single individual were meant. Between a particular individual and the whole of the community many differences. and even entire contrasts, must exist as to praise and blame.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVEN EPISTLES.

Now follow the seven epistles, for which all after the three first verses has been only of an introductory and preparatory nature. The blessed Paul marks it in 1 Cor. xiv. 25 as one of the most important purposes of prophecy to make manifest the secrets of the heart. Scripture declares salvation only to those who form the true church of the Lord, who live in the Spirit. But along with the promise the admonition always goes hand in hand, and always the more disposed the false seed are to appropriate to themselves what belongs only to the true. To Isaias, for example, the commission was given in the second part of his prophecies to *comfort* the people of God, by announcing the approaching manifestation of the Lord. But with the announcement of salvation the call to repent, and the admonition to be faithful, is constantly combined ; comp. for example, ch. lvi. 1, "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment and do justice, for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed;" ch. lviii. 1, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin." In the New Testament also, the proclamation of God's judgment on the world, and his glorification of the church, goes hand in hand with urgent admonitions to the members of the latter to get themselves ready for the Lord's coming, so that it may prove to them a blessing and not a curse. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always," says our Lord in Luke xxi. 36, "that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." And Peter in his second epistle, ch. iii. 11, says, "Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." So also John, speaking of the Christian hope, declares that whoever has it, "purifies himself even as Christ is pure." Here, John is going to show to the servants of Christ what must shortly come to pass, ch. i. 1,

he is going to reveal to them the salvation that Christ has purposed to bring to his suffering church, avenging her of her enemies, and raising her from the dust to sit upon the throne of his glory. But before he is equipped by Christ for the fulfilment of this calling, which he accomplishes from the beginning of ch. iv. to the end of the book, he must prepare those committed to him for the purpose of Christ—not, as Bengel thinks, for receiving the Revelation, but for the great events of the future themselves. He must dissipate the idea, that the *name* of Christians forms the wall of separation between them and the world, call forth the spiritual state of things which alone can render the coming of the Lord salutary, awaken the slothful and unfaithful to repentance, admonish the faithful and diligent to a steady perseverance and continuance to the end; comp. ii. 5, 10, 16, 25; iii. 11, 19.

In respect to the plan of the epistles Bengel gives a series of excellent remarks, which we deem it right to communicate in his own words. "The conception of the seven epistles is throughout similar. For in each one there is, 1. A command to write to an angel of a church. 2. A glorious title of Jesus Christ. 3. An address to the angel of the church; wherein is contained (1) a testimony regarding its present mixed, or good, or bad condition; (2) an admonition to repentance or to stedfastness; (3) an announcement of what is to take place, for the most part of the coming of the Lord. 4. A promise to those that overcome, together with the awakening words, He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

"The address in each epistle is couched in plainer language, while in the promise Christ speaks more in a flowery style. In the address the Lord Jesus Christ speaks primarily and immediately to the churches in Asia then existing, and more especially to the angels of them; the promise speaks in the third person of those who then and also in future times should overcome.

"Of the seven angels of the seven churches there were two, those at Ephesus and Pergamos, in a mixed state, and two, those at Sardis and Laodicea, in a very corrupt one. Not only those whose state was bad, but also those with whom there was a lack, are exhorted to repent, as are likewise the followers of Jezebel at Thyatira, since she herself would not repent, and the angel there did not need for himself to repent. Two, those at Smyrna and

Philadelphia, were in a very healthful condition, and on that account were not called to exercise repentance, but were only admonished to be stedfast. There is no mixed, or good, or bad state, of which we have not here a pattern, and profitable, salutary instruction provided for it. Whether one may be so dead as the angel of the church at Sardis, or may stand so well as that at Philadelphia, and the aged apostle John himself, this book is still fitted to be serviceable to him, and the Lord Jesus has something in it to say to him.

"In the seven epistles there are twelve promises. In the third, fourth, and sixth, there is a double promise, and in the fifth a threefold one, which are distinguished from each other by a special word: I will give, I will not blot out, I will confess, I will write.—In the promise for those that overcome, sometimes the enjoyment of the highest good, sometimes freedom from the greatest troubles is held forth. The one is included in the other, and when some one part of blessedness and glory is expressed, the whole is thereby to be understood (ch. xxi. 7.) That part is particularly expressed which has reference to the virtues and deeds mentioned in the preceding address. In these promises notice is taken of various things, which are not again referred to in the Revelation, as the manna, the confession of the name, the inscribed name of the New Jerusalem, the sitting upon the throne. Some things carry a resemblance to what is afterwards found in the representations given of Christ, in particular, the secret name, ch. xix. 12, the heritage of the nations, ch. xix. 15, the morning star, ch. xxii. 16. Other things, again, occur afterwards in their own place, as the tree of life, ch. xxii. 2, freedom from the second death, ch. xx. 6, the name in the book of life, ch. xx. 12, xxi. 27, remaining in the temple of God, ch. vii. 15, the name of God and of the Lamb on the righteous, ch. xiv. 1, xxii. 4."

What is said of the churches in praise or blame is completed in the number three. The Refrain: "Who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches," has ten words, divided by three and seven, and the latter again by the three and four. The seven number of the epistles is divided by the three and four. For, in the three first, the call "Who has an ear," &c., stands before the closing promise, while in the four last it follows after the other. Then, in the four last epistles, the clos-

ing promise itself has a peculiar construction : He that overcomes I give to him.[1] This division must have a quite definite ground, and has already been noticed under i. 11. Elsewhere also, in the seals, the trumpets, and the vials, the seven is divided by the four and three.

In his latter days Bengel strongly recommended to those about him the careful meditation of the apocalyptic epistles. He said, "There was scarcely any thing that was so much fitted to affect and purify us."

THE EPISTLE TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS, II. 1—7.

The servants of Christ in the church at Ephesus, in which Paul had laboured for a longer period than at any other place, and which he afterwards committed to the charge of Timothy (1 Tim. i. 3), had not fully responded to the exhortation of Paul : "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." They had displayed great zeal in contending against dangerous heretics, who had appeared among them, "the grievous wolves" of whom the apostle had forewarned them ; but with this zeal, which is first of all acknowledged, they had forgotten their first love. Hence they are impressively called to repentance.

Ver. 1. *To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These things saith he who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks amid the seven golden lamps.* It is not accidental that exactly in this epistle, which begins the series, predicates are attributed to Christ, which mark his unrestricted power over the seven churches, and their angels (and hence also over the church in Ephesus and its angel.) These predicates, at the same time, form here the foundation of the threatening in ver. 5, and of the promise in ver. 7. The first is taken from ch. i. 16. The *holding*, however, here is stronger than the *having* there ; the distinction between the two is plainly indicated in ver. 25 ; Christ

[1] Bengel: "In the four latter promises ὁ νικῶν, as if it had the distinctive Hebr. accent, is marked with the greatest emphasis ; in the three former τῷ νικῶντι (as an equivalent for which in the second we have ὁ νικῶν without οὗτος) there is a closer union with the following verb."

holds them fast, so that no one can pluck them out of his hand, whether he is minded to protect or to destroy them. The *second* predicate is from ch. i. 12. There Christ *is* in the midst of the seven golden lamps, here he *walks* in the midst of them. The walking points to the circumstance, that the being of Christ in the midst of his church is one of continued activity, that he is everywhere at hand whether the occasion may require him to chastise or to help her. A glance at him who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks is the best antidote against a false security as well as despair.

Ver. 2. *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil, and hast tried those who say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars.* We have here, and in ver. 3, a threefold three of acknowledgments before us, which the generous love of Jesus made to take precedence of the blame, that there might be obtained for this a more favourable ear and a more hopeful consideration. The middle three throws light upon the first and the third, and supplies a more limited application to what is there said in a general way. Accordingly, the works, the labour, the patience or stedfastness there refer to the zeal that had been shewn against false teachers. If this is not perceived, then the reproach in ver. 4 of their having lost their first love, will be incomprehensible. For, where the first love has ceased, there a praiseworthy zeal in some particular line may for a considerable period easily be found, the love that still remains concentrating itself in that direction (a *dead* orthodoxy, however zealous, would certainly not have received such praise from the Lord); but it is in the nature of things impossible that Christian works, labour, and stedfastness generally could have been found there deserving of praise. With the cause the effect also is sure to cease. In like manner the patiently borne sufferings in ver. 3 are such as were encountered in their zeal against the false teachers. In ver. 6 all the praise, which in ver. 2 and 3 had been conferred on the angel at Ephesus, is collected into the one point, that he hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. *There is great danger when the church is called by the pressure of circumstances to give special heed to some one important matter, that all her vigour shall be concentrated there; and also great danger that the accusations*

of conscience regarding the neglect of other things shall then be silenced by fixing the eye exclusively upon the exertions made in the one department. It was in that extremely perilous condition that the angel of the church at Ephesus now stood. And when in such a condition, if the call to repent is resisted, very soon also will all that is properly Christian in the one remaining virtue be imperilled. All one-sidedness ends in the loss even of the one side itself. It is dying life only that survives in a single organ. When the other members have become cold, the heart will not continue long to beat.

The expression, "I know," occurs seven times; "I know thy works," four times according to the genuine text; and, according to the right division of the seven, mention is made thrice of another object of knowing, "I know thy tribulation," ii. 9, "I know where thou dwellest," ii. 13, "I know thy love," ii. 19. Regarding the works with the labour and patience as forming the first three, it is certain that here the discourse can only be of good works, or more definitely of Christian exploits against the teachers of erroneous tenets. We must not conclude from the circumstance of the expression, "I know thy works," occurring also there, where they were only the object of blame, that works are used indifferently, and that only the divine omniscience in general is brought into view. From its connection alone with the labour and the patience the knowledge indicated respecting the works, though in itself indefinite, receives a more specific determination. The *labour* against the heretics did not belong to the whole community, but to those that were in office; comp. 1 Tim. v. 17, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." The *patience* in connection with the labour and the not being able to bear the evil can only be active patience, stedfastness. In this way alone do we get rid of the otherwise troublesome repetition in ver. 3. The badness of those who were *evil* consisted precisely in this, that they maintained they were apostles and were not, but lied. Bengel remarks on the words, "and canst not bear them that are evil," as follows: "Many would regard the pastor as a keen and contentious man, and cry out against him as one who would not keep terms with others that were still not to be rejected. But the Lord praises him. There was in him a pure and tender regard for the truth. In his patience there was

a laudable impatience. To be able, with a cold unconcern about the good, to bear those who are sunk in impurities, is not good. It is not only said, Cleave to that which is good, but also, Hate and shun that which is evil. Here one must not be indifferent. What is meant is not a self-willed intolerance, but a just hatred against the evil, feeling the existence of such characters to be a burden. For, where there is love to God, and something of an adverse kind comes in the way, zeal will doubtless be awakened thereby.—Paul had testified beforehand, that after his departure pernicious wolves would come in, and from among themselves perverse teachers would arise; in dealing with these the angel of the church had enough to do and to suffer."—The *trying* stands opposed to a superficial enthusiasm, which at once takes all for gold that glitters. It corresponds to the *proving* (δοκιμάζειν, comp. John vi. 6, 2 Cor. xiii. 5) in 1 John iv. 1—3. These passages are throughout strongly analogous. The angel at Ephesus is here commended for having done what the apostle there enjoined his readers to do.—That the false teachers here are identical with those in ver. 6 is clear, for the simple reason, that otherwise no more specific description of these would be given, which still could not be wanting, since this epistle is not destined merely for the Ephesians, but forms an integral part of the entire book, which belongs to the church at large. How little the book itself contains of definite marks for distinguishing the heretical teachers, is manifest from the vacillating to and fro and want of unanimity on the part of those who confine themselves to it. Further, ver. 6 obviously points back to what had already been said in vers. 2 and 3. What belonged as matter of praise to the angel at Ephesus is fully declared in vers. 2 and 3; and, after the sharp reproof has been administered, the commendation is only once again resumed for the purpose of pouring balm into the wounds, and to prevent the painful sense of sin they might feel from generating a mistaken view of their excellencies. If in ver. 6 a new subject had been introduced, something more particular would have been said regarding it, than simply "this thou hast." It would rather have been, "Besides what I have already acknowledged, thou hast so and so;" in which case, however, it would have been introduced in a very unsuitable way. A third reason is, that only when by the false teachers here we understand those who sought to bring Christianity and heathenism nearer to each other, con-

sequently the Nicolaitans, in ver. 6, do we find a proper explanation of ver. 3, where the Ephesians are commended for their patience under sufferings, which befel them precisely on account of their decided resistance against every attempt to confound the boundary-lines between Christianity and heathenism. Now, whenever it is understood that the false teachers are identical with those in ver. 6, not merely does this verse itself receive a more definite sense, but the epistles also to the angels in Pergamos and Thyatira afford supplementary aid, and the image of the false teachers presents itself to us in clear outline from the scattered traits, as was quite necessary, if the epistles were to answer their destination as sources of instruction and warning for all times. For in that case they behoved to provide the means for ascertaining with certainty what might afterwards arise of a similar kind. But if we indeed have here before us, not Judaizing heretics, but the same ethnicizing seducers, whom we afterwards also meet with, then it is unquestionable that in the whole seven epistles we have escaped in respect to false teaching from the territory of St Paul's time. Paul had always to do chiefly with Judaizing heretics, the ordinary and the philosophical. That the latter in particular had exercised a considerable influence in the churches of Asia, is manifest from the epistle to the Colossians, and, as regards the church at Ephesus in particular, from the first epistle to Timothy—comp. Neander's Apost. Zeitalter, I. p. 465, Baumgarten Æchtheit der Pastoralbr. p. 171, ss. This fact, that the power of the Jewish form of error appears as entirely broken among the Gentile churches and gone (with which it is quite compatible that Justin should have known particular Gentile Christians who could plead for the observance of the Mosaic law), presupposes that at the time when the Revelation was composed Jerusalem already lay in ruins. On the powerful influence which this must have exerted on the formation of the Christian church, Rothe has made some excellent remarks in his Anfänge der Christlichen Kirche, Th. I. p. 341, ss. "The Christian churches stood now perfectly independent. And, indeed, it was the Most High himself who had made them independent, since by the lightning-stroke of his Omnipotence he had torn asunder the sacred bond by which they had been entwined with the institutions of the Old Covenant.—Therefore now, when once

the sanctuary of the Old Covenant was laid in the dust, the Jewish Christians must have been set more free from their Judaism, and felt more drawn toward their fellow Christians of the Gentiles. The divine judgment inflicted on Israel was God's solemn rejection of Israel and their religious institutions. From that time Judaism everywhere lost its real power and importance. With the fall of the temple at Jerusalem fell also the wall of separation, which had divided the people of God from the nations of the earth, and from the nature of things the Pauline universalism must rise to the ascendant, with which at first the Jewish particularism, supported by the authority of Peter and James, had so earnestly contended." From that period other dangers and temptations threatened the Christian church, which sprung from heathenism, and which even in Paul's age had begun to operate, but were then only of subordinate importance (Hymenaeus and Philetus turned only some persons from the faith); the danger it threatened was chiefly in respect to the future. In the Apocalypse the Christian church appears quite escaped from the influence of Judaism. All tendency in that direction, such as everywhere meets us in the times of Paul, has entirely ceased. The Christian church stands opposed to Judaism as the synagogue of Satan, which internally possessed no longer any power over her, and by which she was externally assailed, only that the heathens might be stirred up against her.—The apostles, who are named without any notification of the person who sent them, could only be pretended apostles of God and Christ; and a reference to the supposed sending of the church at Jerusalem would require to have been indicated, even if Judaizing heretics had been the class of persons alluded to. Bengel remarks: "So it was still the apostolic age, otherwise there could no longer have been false apostles in the field. Among the properties belonging to an apostle it was one, that he should have seen the Lord Jesus Christ. So that false apostles were persons, who not only broached false doctrine, but also set this forth with an apostolical air, as if they might have seen Christ, or perhaps falsely pretended to have done so." But we are only led by this to conclude, that the apostolical age had not yet entirely come to an end, as the heretics still did not come forth in the name and the systematic style and form of science, like the later Gnostics, but under a pretended call to

a higher mission and enlightenment; comp. 1 John iv. 1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *prove* the spirits, whether they are of God; for many *false prophets* have gone out into the world." That in this sense the apostleship was laid claim to by these heretics, appears from ver. 20, where Jezebel, the representative of such, calls herself a prophetess. The property made so much of by Bengel did not belong to the apostle Paul, to whom these false teachers constantly appealed, as the Rationalists to Luther. He had not seen the Lord in the flesh.

Ver. 3. *And hast patience, and hast borne for my name sake, and hast not fainted.*[1] In the conflict of Christianity with the world, there is always a temptation to form a bridge between it and Christ for the purpose of getting rid of its assaults. The angel at Ephesus had valiantly withstood this temptation, and with unwearied patience had borne the hatred, which was the consequence of uncompromising fidelity. The patience here meant is, as very commonly, patience under suffering, as contradistinguished from the active patience of ver. 2. The *bearing* denotes the willing endurance of suffering; comp. 2 Kings xviii. 14, "What thou layest on me, I will bear;" Luke xiv. 27, "And he who beareth not his cross, and followeth me, cannot be my disciple," and the example of Christ in John xix. 17. (*Κοπιάω*, commonly to labour; here and in John iv. 6 to be faint, comp. Matth. xi. 28.)

Ver. 4. *But I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love.* Bengel: "I have against thee. This is thrice said in the way of exception against those, who along with their good were chargeable with shortcoming, ver. 14, 20. We have a similar form of speech in Matth. v. 23. If we must make it up with a brother, how much more with the Lord, and that without delay." That in the place of the *first* love we must not put the earlier, appears from ver. 19, where the last works are set over against the first; also from 1 Tim. v. 12, and especially the original passage Jer. ii. 2, "I remember the holiness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, thy walking after me in the wilderness, in a land not sown." That first love we see still flourishing so long as Paul's connection with the Ephesians lasts. Nothing

1 Luther follows here in his translation the corrupt reading: Καὶ ἐβάστασας, καὶ ὑπομονὴν ἔχεις, &c.

in the context leads to a limitation of the love, as for example in Eph. i. 15, Col. i. 4, where the subject discoursed of is love to all the *saints;* so that we must take it in its largest compass, as at Matth. xxiv. 12, and the more so with John, as it is one of his characteristics to combine together the love of God, the love of our neighbour, and brotherly love; comp. 1 John iv. 16. That the love here is not the mere love of feeling, but active love, is clear not only from ver. 5, where the first works are spoken of, but also from ver. 19, where those of Thyatira are commended for that in which the Ephesians here are blamed. There the most unwearied application to active service is mentioned as the great proof of love. Still these are but the particular manifestations, and the grand point always is, that the living source actually exists within; for where this fails, the works that are done are only outwardly and seemingly good.—The misunderstanding of ver. 2 could not fail to give rise to false views also of the verse before us. Thus Vitringa supposes, that in ver. 2 and 3 the earlier state of the church was described, and here the present one. But against this is the, "Thou *canst* not" in ver. 2, and the "Thou *hast,*" in ver. 3; and so also in ver. 6. Others, after the example of Grotius, would restrict the love to deeds of kindness toward the poor, a view that is opposed by what has been already advanced, by the fundamental passage in Jeremiah, and by a comparison of the Epistle to the Ephesians, comp. ch. iii. 18. Also according to ver. 5, the shortcoming is not of a special nature; it concerns the ground-work of Christianity. The root itself was dying away.

Ver. 5. *Remember therefore from whence thou hast fallen, and repent and do the first works. But if not, I will come to thee (shortly), and remove thy lamp out of its place, if thou repent not.* Bengel: "After a backsliding it is needful and salutary to repent," ch. iii. 3. That from which the angel had fallen, is the earlier glorious state, the engaging time of youthful love. Allusion is made, as appears, to Isa. xiv. 12, "How art thou fallen from heaven, thou fine morning-star!" The *shortly* is wanting in several MSS., and has probably been pressed into the text from the parallel passages, ver. 16, iii. 11, xxii. 7, 12, 20. The *shortly* is perhaps too strong here. If the lamp is removed from its place, the church vanishes from the number of the

churches of Christ. The promises, which are given to the whole of Christ's church, grant no charter to individual churches to become lukewarm and to fall away; as, notwithstanding the glorious privileges and promises of Israel, the greater part of them were cast out of the kingdom of God and given over to perdition; Matth. xxi. 43, comp. xxii. 11, where our Lord declares, that the same thing should be repeated on the Christian field. Bossuet: "If the life of the gospel goes out in some one region, it is not therefore extinguished, but is only removed elsewhere, and transferred to another people."

Ver. 6. *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.* Where there is room for reproaching any one for the want of love, it too readily happens, that he thinks he should love, where the word and spirit of God command him to hate. Therefore, the commendation given in the earlier part is here again expressly resumed. But it is well to notice, that the recognition has respect to hatred against the works of heretics. This does not exclude love to their persons, and desire for their salvation; comp. 2 Tim. ii. 24—26. The more lively the hatred is against the works, the more powerfully will love prompt to do what is possible for their personal deliverance from perdition. That the subject discoursed of is not the *doctrine* of the Nicolaitans, but their works, is to be explained from the circumstance, that their doctrine had a practical issue and aim, viz., fleshly freedom, unrestricted liberty as to all authority and all law. It was the moral strength of Christianity at which they especially took offence. Their doctrines themselves were works, deeds, as still all antichristian errors are; and works immediately proceeded from them, such as the eating of meat offered to idols, fornication, and a heathenish mode of life. Then in the works the seductive acts of the false teachers are also comprehended, their attempts to spread their pernicious doctrines. The *hatred* is to be taken in its full force. Disapproval in such matters is not enough. Strong abhorrence is demanded, comp. Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22, "Do not I hate, O Lord, those who hate thee, and abhor those that rise up against thee? I hate them in right earnest, they are enemies to me." We have a commentary on the hating in 2 John ver. 1, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God

speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." The name of the Nicolaitans is an enigmatical one, the solution of which is given in ver. 14 and 15. According to this the Nicolaitans are those who hold the doctrine of Balaam. The name of Balaam signifies, Destroyer of the people.[1] As such Balaam shewed himself especially in the transaction recorded by Moses in Numb. xxv., comp. with xxxi. 16, the seduction of the Israelites through the women of Moab and Midian to licentiousness and participation in the service of idolatry. The Moabites and Midianites had directed their attack against the strong side of the relation, and had been obliged to withdraw with shame and disgrace; Balaam betrayed to them the weak side, and how cunningly his plan was devised appeared in the great success with which it was at first attended. Nicolaus signifies, conqueror of the people. The choice precisely of this name, rather than one that should have literally corresponded to Balaam, was occasioned by the name Nicolaus being one in current use among the Greeks. The point of comparison, by which the prophet was led to name false teachers of that time Nicolaitans, that is Balaamites, appears from ver. 14. It was the smuggling of heathenism into the church of God to the corruption of the latter: "who taught Balak to throw a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." Balaam and Jezebel were the Old Testament representatives of this ungodly tendency, which revived anew in the false teachers of the time. Ch. ii. 26 serves also as an explanation, "And he that overcomes, to him will I give power over the heathen," in opposition to the power of the heathen over God's people, which they experienced through the Balaam that had risen up anew in Greek clothing. The reasons against a historical explanation of the name of Nicolaitans, and its derivation from a sectarian of the name of Nicolaus, which led some of the ancients to think of the

1 The grounds for the derivation of Balaam from בִּלַּע devouring, and עַם people, have been given in my work on Balaam, p. 20, ss. Against Hoffmann, who after Ewald explains the name as a formation of בִּלַּע with ם as אבירם, it is enough to adduce the one consideration, that the city of the same name, 1 Chron. vi. 55, elsewhere occurs under the name of Jibleam, Josh. xvii. 11, Judges i. 27, 2 Kings ix. 27, compounded of the fut. of בלע and עם. But proper names with עם sometimes before and sometimes after are very common; comp. Ewald, § 270, for example, Rehoboam and Jeroboam, people-rich and people-increased.

blameless Nicolaus in Acts vi. 5, the only person of that name mentioned in New Testament history, have been considered in my treatise on Balaam already referred to. Against the opinion is, 1. The style of the Apocalypse, which constantly rises above the lower territory, and, with the quite necessary exception of the author's own name, employs not historical, but only symbolical names. 2. The analogy of the woman Jezebel in ch. ii. 20. 3. Had the leader of a party been understood, Nicolaus, the author would have spoken of him at ch. ii. 15, and not of the Nicolaitans, as his name would have been the proper parallel to Balaam's. But he seems to know nothing of a Nicolaus, but only of the Nicolaitans. So also in ver. 2 he speaks not of *a* false apostle, but of false apostles. There is no weight in the objection, that the name stands here, where it occurs for the first time, without any explanation, and must therefore have been a common one, quite intelligible of itself to the readers of the book. It was perfectly natural that the mystical, enigmatical name should here for the first time have been used by itself, and that afterwards, in what follows, an insight should have been given into its import, for the purpose of confirming or of justifying what had already occurred to the mind of each.—If we gather up the scattered particulars, we arrive at the following deliverance regarding the false prophets. The mystical names of the Nicolaitans or Baalamites, and of Jezebel, point to the heathenish origin of the heresy, as do also the fornication and the eating of flesh sacrificed to idols, in ver. 14, 20, and the promise of the authority to rule over the heathen in ver. 26. The false teachers pretended to have been favoured with higher revelations, ver. 2 and 20, and promised to bring people acquainted with profound knowledge and secrets, ver. 14, 17, and to raise them to a glorious state, ver. 28. Allusion is made to the name of the Gnostics in ver. 24, and also to their antinomianism and their false, delusive show of liberty. So also to their sensuous indulgences in ver. 7, 17.—The first small kernel of these aberrations we find in the church at Corinth. They appear in a more developed form in the two epistles to Timothy. There certain heretical teachers are discoursed of, "whose perverse course is thrice described in the same words ("they have made shipwreck of faith, have erred concerning the truth, faith," 1 Tim. i. 19, 20, vi. 20, and 2 Tim. ii. 16—18,

25); and of whom we learn, that they professed a gnosis falsely so called, and maintained it with vain talk and insolent opposition to the apostle, so that they even pushed their heresy to blasphemous lengths, and were cast out of the church by Paul. Of the principles of their gnosis we are informed only in respect to one point, that held by Hymenæus and Philetus as to the resurrection being past already—meaning, that it is to be understood only in a spiritualistic sense, that there is to be no resurrection but that which Christians have in their souls undergone" (Thiersch, Versuch, p. 237.) Peter and Jude in their epistles combated the error of the ungodly (2 Pet. ii. 16), who in abuse of St Paul's doctrine turned the grace of God into lasciviousness (iii. 16), promised freedom, while they themselves were still the servants of corruption (Jude ver. 4, 2 Pet. ii. 19), walked after the flesh, and thought themselves raised above all constituted authorities, as well as delivered from the law, nay even denied the Lord Jesus Christ himself (2 Pet. ii. 10, Jude ver. 4.)—The identity of the false teachers, whom John contends against in his epistles, and the Nicolaitans, cannot be mistaken. There also every trace fails of any reference to Judaizing errors; the power that was imperilling Christianity was heathenism vailing itself in a Christian dress. The conclusion of the first epistle, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," serves as a sort of key. There, too, an entire abandonment of the Christian basis and principles is in question, 2 John ii. 19; while the false theories that were propagated carried along with them a bad practice, a walking in the lusts of the flesh; comp. in regard to the intimate connection between the two especially, 2 John ver. 6, 7. Fleshly indulgence is common to the Apocalypse with the epistles. In a theoretical respect there is a distinction so far, that the denial combated in the epistles of the reality of Christ's life, work and sufferings, is not noticed here. That heresy, however, stands in the closest connection with the antinomianism, which is here also brought into view. The common root of both was the disposition to set one's self free from a power that should control the life, in order to indulge the flesh and walk after its carnal lusts. With this view the law was decried as a Pharisaical yoke, comp. ii. 24, and Christ changed into a shadow. It is worthy of remark, in unison with ch. ii. 24 here, how extremely common is the use of

γινώσκω in the epistles, in opposition to the Gnostics, who had it constantly in their lips. In contrast to their false gnosis John puts the true, comp. 1 John ii. 4, iii. 6.

Ver. 7. *He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches: He that overcomes, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God.* Bengel: "There is a remarkable difference between the address and the promise. The address has immediate respect to the seven churches in Asia and their angels, and consequently also to all churches and pastors, who might be similarly circumstanced with them in good and evil, in all times and places; the promise, on the other hand, is given forth to all spiritual conquerors, though not excluding such in Asia." In this promise, as the close of the epistle, the churches must be reminded, that they came into consideration only as a part of the whole, that they were but churches, and must not imagine themselves to be the church, notwithstanding that the last of the apostles stood in a peculiar relation to them.—The words, "He that has an ear let him hear," form a striking point of connection between the Apocalypse and the three first gospels, more especially the first of the three. There, in the discourses of our Lord, who also speaks here, the words "He that has an ear to hear let him hear," and "He that reads let him understand" (comp. also the quite corresponding expression, "He that can hold, let him hold," in Matth. xix. 12), are not a mere call to attention, but they also intimate, that to the apprehension of what had been delivered, more was necessary than the outward ear; it was a demand for the deeper spiritual understanding (see the proof in my Beiträge I. p. 261.) In this sense the call here stands very suitably in connection with promises made to the church, which were in themselves mysterious, and required a spiritual exposition.—In place of the *ears* in Matth. xi. 15, xiii. 9, 43, we have here, and again in ch. xiii. 9, the *ear*. The spiritual sense of the mind can be denoted by the singular, because it is only one, and by the plural, because of the corresponding bodily organ. And in repetitions of this sort such a change is perhaps occasionally introduced to show, that the appropriation of the language is fresh and independent.—That the expression, "What the Spirit says," is as much as, what I through the Spirit say to you, is clear from this, that in what follows the

address is spoken from the person of Christ: I will give; and then; which is in the paradise of *my* God. (The omission of the *my* in some critical helps, which Luther follows, arose from people considering the address of Christ and of the Spirit as standing in contrast). John was in the Spirit, ch. i. 9, and only through the medium of the Spirit could Christ after his departure communicate himself, and his admonitions and promises. In the Gospel of John "the Spirit is promised as a new principle, which was to go between Jesus and the church" (Köstlin, p. 198.) The Lord had spoken of the Holy Spirit to his disciples as of one that should teach them all things, John xiv. 26.—Of the *victory* John speaks very frequently in his Gospel, his Epistles, and the Apocalypse. The victory must be won against all opponents, of whom there are many, and in particular against the Nicolaitans, whose desire of sensual enjoyment is met by the promise of eating spiritual, heavenly food. The angel of Ephesus still wanted a good deal to obtain the true victory over these. The victory hitherto won was in good part only an apparent one, since it was purchased with the heavy loss of the first love. By the construction: "he that overcomes, to him," the overcoming being detached from any immediate connection with the following words, comes prominently out, and appears as an indispensable condition to participation in the promise. Bengel: "A Christian must overcome as Jesus Christ has overcome, ch. iii. 21, v. 5. He that overcomes is found in all the seven epistles, and afterwards is only repeated once, ch. xxi. 7." The prosaic expression for, "I will give him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God," we have in 1 John ii. 25, "And this is the promise, which he has given us, eternal life." For, that here a participation in eternal life, eternal blessedness, eternal salvation is what is promised, is evident alone from the analogy of the other promises. The figurative expression alludes to Gen. ii. 9, iii. 22, according to which in the primeval world the tree of life stood in the midst of paradise, the fruit of which was designed to secure to man the possession of eternal life, if he continued faithful to God. "The first thing promised," says Bengel, "in the seven epistles, is the last and highest in the fulfilment, ch. xxii. 2, 14, 19." No precise locality is denoted by the paradise. According to ch. xxii. the tree of life belongs to the glorified earth. In

ch. vii. 17 it is already said of the provisional heavenly blessedness of the elect, "And he will lead them to fountains of waters of life." According to Ez. xlvii. 6, ss. (where on both sides of a stream of life many trees grew, which bore their fruit every month, and the fruit of which served for food, and their leaves for medicine), and according to ch. xxii. the tree of life is inseparable from the waters of life. We everywhere find the image of the earthly paradise, where the blessedness is spoken of that belongs to the elect of God when actually enjoyed by them. Three times mention is made of paradise in the New Testament, Luke xxiii. 43, 2 Cor. xii. 4, and here. "Of my God," says Jesus Christ here and in ch. iii. 2, 12, but elsewhere he calls him in these promises his Father. Both are a very glorious designation, John xx. 17." Bengel.

THE EPISTLE TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA.

Ch. ii. 8—11.

Bengel: "The angel of the church at Smyrna was in a good state. No such great things, indeed, are recorded of him as of that at Ephesus; but still the angel at Ephesus, with all that was spoken in his commendation, had to repent, while the angel at Smyrna, though such great things are not said of him, is yet spared the call to repent. It is only said to him, Fear not, be faithful. Nothing even is mentioned about great works, but only about fidelity."

Ver. 8. *And to the angel of the church at Smyrna write: These things saith the first and the last, he that was dead and is alive again.* The predicates which are attributed to Christ, are from ch. i. 18. They bear altogether a consolatory character. If Christ is the first and the last, then shall his true people also at last conquer with him, triumph and reign; and they must not suffer themselves to be cast down, if they are now for a little season depressed. He has been dead and has again risen to life; therefore his people must not shun to be faithful even unto death. And since he has risen from the dead, and because he has done so, death can only be for them also a transition to life. Bengel:

"Christ was the life before his death, therefore death could inflict but a short sting in him; his power of life was not thereby in the least injured; but when he was put to death after the flesh, the hidden power of the Spirit from the moment of his death broke forth with the more freedom, as if it had reached the heavens." It is in a high degree probable, that by the time this epistle was written, Polycarp stood at the head of the church in Smyrna. On that supposition the whole character of the epistle readily explains itself. The objections to this rest merely upon the false idea, that the Apocalypse was composed under Galba instead of under Domitian. The martyrdom of Polycarp took place under Marcus Aurelius Verus, about the year 168. He had served Christ eighty and six years, as he himself says in Eusebius IV. 15. If the Apocalypse was written about the year 96, there would remain a number of years from his conversion to his entrance on office. Polycarp, the Joshua of John, must from his whole character have lived a considerable period with him, and in the closest fellowship. Irenæus in Euseb. V. 20 relates, that he had in his youth learned from Polycarp, what he was wont to "communicate of his familiar intercourse with John and those who had seen the Lord; how also he used to relate their discourses, and what he had heard of them concerning the Lord." Eusebius says in B. III. c. 36, "About this time (under Trajan, therefore somewhere about the time of the composition of the Apocalypse) flourished in Asia Polycarp, a scholar of the apostles, who received the episcopate of the church at Smyrna, from the servants and eye-witnesses of the Lord himself." About the year 108 he was found by Ignatius bishop of Smyrna. The account of the church of Smyrna respecting his martyrdom also styles him "an apostolical teacher." According to Iranæus in Euseb. IV. 14, "Polycarp had not merely been instructed by the apostles, and enjoyed familiar intercourse with many who had seen Christ, but had also been appointed bishop by the apostles of the church at Smyrna in Asia." "We saw him," says Irenæus, "when we still were very young. For he lived very long, and ended his life in an extreme age by a glorious and splendid martyrdom, after having continually taught what he had learned from the apostles." Tertullian expressly testifies that Polycarp was settled by John as bishop of Smyrna (De Praesc.

haeret. c. 32), and the others must have had the same apostle more especially in their eye, when they speak of the apostles. So also Jerome (catal. scrip. Eccles.)

Ver. 9. *I know thy tribulation and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of those, who say they are Jews and are not, but are of the school of Satan.* Luther has: I know thy works and thy tribulation, etc. But the words: *I know thy works and* have certainly arisen from the efforts of the copyists to produce uniformity. They are wanting in the best manuscripts, and internal reasons also concur in strengthening the external ones. *Works* do not suit here. For they could only be mentioned if good or bad works had been found in the context, to give a definite meaning to the term. But there the discourse is only of sufferings. Farther, the number three, on which what follows the "I know" always completes itself, would thereby be destroyed. Bengel: "The description given respecting this angel is only of what he suffered, not of what he did. Suffering tends much to purify, and it had been experienced by this angel of various kinds: he had suffered tribulation from Jews and heathens, and also poverty. But thou art rich, says the Lord, namely, in heavenly treasures. The pastor would not think highly of himself because he was described in such glowing terms, but the Lord used such language respecting him, because in his humility he could bear it." That the *poverty* (to this sense of the word we must adhere for the sake of the contrast with *riches*) must bear respect to the persecutions suffered for the cause of Christ is clear from the circumstance, that it stands between the tribulation and the blasphemy. Now several consider the poverty as arising out of the persecution—comp. Heb. x. 34. But in that case the word *spoiling* would rather have been used. James ii. 5—7 serves as a commentary, "Has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith? Do not the rich oppress you, and draw you before the judgment-seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" We can scarcely doubt that allusion is made to this passage. It has in common with the one before us, poverty, riches in God, blasphemy. Now, according to it, poverty comes into consideration in so far as it rendered the Christians helpless and oppressed. The Jews brought against the Christians false accusations before the hea-

then magistrates (blasphemy), and as they had ample pecuniary means ready to support their accusations against the Christians (poverty), the Christians were thrown into great straits, were in a state of oppression corresponding in James to the drawing before the judgment-seats. The *riches*, which the angel possessed in the midst of his poverty, refers to riches in heavenly goods and rewards, treasures in heaven, Matt. vi. 20, xix. 21, comp. Luke xii. 21, which in due time would be conferred on him. This is manifest from James ii. 5, where the persecuted poor are spoken of as "heirs of the kingdom, which God has promised to those that love him." Allusion is made, as appears, to the name Polycarpus, rich in fruits; comp. the remarks on the name Antipas in ch. ii. 13. With the *blasphemy* the Jewish adversaries must be content; the persecution could only come from the heathen. Even at the martyrdom of Polycarp the Jews inflamed the malice of the heathens, Euseb. IV. 15), and sought to prevent his corpse from being given to the Christians. The Jews were proud of their name, Jews and children of the kingdom, members of the Lord's flock, Numb. xxxi. 16, were all one in their account. In this sense there was a pretension in the name they took to themselves. There were no other real Jews than such as possessed the true and internal marks of fellowship in the kingdom of God; and these were no other than true Christians; comp. Rom. ii. 28, 29, ix. 6.—The school of Satan (properly, community, synagogue, what in Jas. ii. 2 is used of the society of Christians, acquired on account of the passage before us a bad secondary meaning; people were accustomed to place the synagogue of the Jews in opposition to the church of the Christians), was an epithet applied to the Jews on account of their hatred to the true church. Satan appears in this book pre-eminently as the persecutor of the righteous, according to the character which he acquired even in the most ancient times, since he instigated wicked Cain to murder righteous Abel, John viii. 44. This is certainly to be regarded as the fundamental passage.

Ver. 10. *Fear not what thou wilt suffer. Behold the devil will cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* "As foreseen evils hurt and terrify less, it is a proof of our Lord's fidelity that he shews

the rod before the smiting took place, Luke ix. 23, John xvi. 1, 33." The announcement of the suffering suggests a twofold source of consolation—first, the persecution will be shortened, and then those who suffer in it will attain to blessedness. It is in itself of general import: times of persecution are always followed by times of revival; God's protecting hand, which defends the church, makes itself known by causing the persecution always to come by fits and starts. What would have become of the church, if all the persecutions of heathen Rome had followed one another in immediate succession? And to those who are faithful unto death, God in every age gives the crown of life. But that this general truth should have been applied precisely to the angel of the church in Smyrna, in this certainly lies an indication of the particular fate that awaited him, or rather the man who formed the soul of those who bore rule in that community. Polycarp was faithful even to the death, and was therefore "crowned with the crown of martyrdom," as was said in the church's report of his martyrdom, doubtless with allusion to what was written here. And with his death the ten days' persecution came to an end: the report says, that Polycarp had by his martyrdom, as it were, given the seal to the persecution, and finished it (Euseb. IV. 15.)—In the preceding verse Satan was the subject of discourse; here the author of the persecution is called the devil, διάβολος, properly the Calumniator. Züllig: "This adversary was quite properly called a calumniator by the LXX. in reference to the part he acted in the book of Job, and Zech. iii. In the relation of the Jewish adversaries of Jesus towards his followers, the designation of Satanism (antagonism), as a calumniating, diabolical one, was the more suitable, as their malice could only vent itself in calumniating their opponents before the heathen magistrates." Also in ch. xii. 10, where Satan and the devil are likewise connected together, respect is had to the internal difference of the two names. If we understand here by the devil the calumniator, a closer connection will be found to exist between this verse and the preceding one, where the blasphemies or venomous slanders of the synagogue of Satan are spoken of. In a series of passages, Justin, in his conversations with Tryphon, describes the Jews as the chief authors of the calumnies against the Christians, which in his time were still current. "How little," re-

marks Hoffmann justly, "this would suit the time when the Jewish war made the whole Jewish people be suspected of a rebellious disposition, is self-evident;" and the Apocalypse must have been composed during that war, if it belonged, according to the modern supposition, to the reign of Galba.—"Trial," says Bengel, "is on the devil's part of an evil and dangerous nature; but on the part of the Lord it is good and salutary. An old, well-tried warrior is worth far more than one who is new-fledged and without experience."—*Ten days*, among short periods a long one; comp. 1 Sam. xxv. 38, Dan. i. 12, Gen. xxiv. 55, where the ten days are beyond doubt, as here also, used as a round period. There is an indication of shortness in the employment of *days*, and a certain length also in the shortness, neither very great nor very small, in coupling with the days, not an unit or an hundred, but a ten.—By the *death* we are to understand from the connection a violent one. The *till* has respect, not to the continuance, but to the high degree of the required fidelity. The angel must follow the example of Christ, who, according to Phil. ii. 8, was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; comp. ch. xii. 11.—The *crown* is here, as in ch. iv. 4, vi. 2, ix. 7, xiv. 14, not the crown of victory, but the badge of royal dignity. We are not on this account, however, to suppose with Züllig, that the subject of discourse is the kingdom of the conqueror. The kingly crown here is brought into view rather as something of a very rich and glorious nature—"the crown of life," as much as, life, eternal blessedness; comp. on the idea of life at vii. 17, which is so glorious a possession, that the splendour of all kings' crowns pales before it. So, as the image of the glorious the crown is not unfrequently used in the Old Testament; for example, in Isa. lxii. 3, "And thou art a glorious crown in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God;" xxviii. 3, where the crown of Ephraim is but another name for his glory.[1] Death is not to be feared, where it is the passage to a glorious life. In a wonderful manner does the Apocalypse here discover itself as the closing book of the New Testament. It makes allusion to the declarations of Paul, Peter, and James, in which a crown of glory is promised as

1 Gesenius Thes. s. v. עטרת: coronæ autem imagine designatur quidquid alicui ornamento est et dignitati, Job xix. 9; coronam detraxit de capite meo, Prov. xii. 4, xiv. 24, etc.

a reward to faithfulness. Paul speaks of "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord will give to him, and to all those who love his appearing," 2 Tim. iv. 8; and Peter comforts faithful elders with the incorruptible crown of glory, which they shall receive, at the time of the good Shepherd's appearance, 1 Pet. v. 4. James speaks of God (i. 12) as having promised the crown of life to those who love him. John here had specially in his eye this passage of James: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those that love him." For here also a preceding temptation is spoken of, and the expression, the crown of life, is common to the two passages, and to these only. In ver. 9 an undoubted allusion is again made to the epistle of James; and the one reference confirms the other. There is never any reason for thinking of the crown of victory, unless perhaps in 1 Cor. ix. 25. In Peter nothing is said in the context of the conflict and the crown. Images from heathen life (and such an one is the crown of victory), must not be resorted to without necessity, least of all in the Apocalypse, which clings so fast to holy ground.[1]

Ver. 11. *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches: He that overcomes, shall not be hurt by the second death.* He that overcomes, not only obtains a glorious good, but he also escapes a dreadful evil. Let him ponder well, when a choice is set before him between the bodily death, as it is usually called, and the second death, or eternal damnation, which they have to expect who are not faithful unto death. Matth. x. 28, "Fear not those who kill the body," etc. coincides in thought. The *second death* is explained in ch. xx. 14, xxi. 8, by the lake of fire, hell. The expression is confined in Scripture to this book, in which it occurs four times. But before John's time it was not unusual in Jewish theology.[2] Our Lord fre-

1 The author would be quite an alius a se ipso, if Ewald's supposition were right: Inprimis hic respicitur ad ludos Olympicos, ab Hercule institutos, in quibus victores publice donati sunt cornona.

2 Vitringa: It doubtless arose in the school of the holy men, who after the return from Babylon explained the faith and the hopes of the church. It is in frequent use in the Chald. Paraphrase of the books of the Old Testament: for example, Deut. xxxiii. 6, Vivat Ruben, et ne moriatur morte secunda.

quently uses for the same thing the word Gehenna, Matth. v. 29, 30, x. 28, Luke xii. 5.

THE EPISTLE TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS.

Ch. ii. 12—17.

Züllig: "More praise than blame; only a little not quite as it should be. The church is characterised as faithful, amid the difficult relations in which it lived. However, there was there also the mischief of the Balaamites, in regard to which a warning is addressed to it and a threatening appended."

Ver. 12. *And to the angel of the church at Pergamos write: These things saith he who has the sharp two-edged sword.* The sharp two-edged sword is from ch. i. 16. "The sharpness," says Bengel, "of this slaughter weapon must be experienced by the impenitent, ver. 16, xix. 21. The angel at Pergamos had, according to the tenor of his future conduct, either to be afraid of this sword on account of his people, or to comfort himself regarding it as assuring him of victory over the enemies." The first aspect is expressly indicated in ver. 16.

Ver. 13. *I know where thou dwellest, where Satan's throne is, and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in the days, in which Antipas (was) my faithful witness, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.* Copyists bent on uniformity have here also shoved in "thy works and," after "I know." Besides the external grounds, there are also internal ones against the insertion. For what immediately follows is no work, and the threefoldness of the points noticed is made up without it. There can be no doubt that Pergamos is called the throne of Satan from being a principal seat of persecution against the Christians, or rather *the* principal seat in Asia. For, in ver. 10, Satan had also been mentioned as the author of persecution, and in a similar respect the throne of Satan is brought into notice in ch. xiii. 2. But how the persecuting malice should have concentrated itself exactly in Pergamos, cannot with certainty be determined. The circumstance of its being the seat of a higher

court of judicature has been thought of as a reason.[1] But this is not a sufficient reason, as the other leading cities of Asia had such courts also. It has been supposed that Pergamos was inordinately devoted to the service of idolatry above all cities in Asia. But there is no proof of this, though Pergamos is known to have had a famous temple to Æsculapius. The reason is most probably to be sought in individual persons, who were peculiarly animated by heathenish fanaticism, as the reason also of the internal differences that subsisted among the churches of Asia is to be sought in the existence, or the absence of leading persons more fully penetrated by the Spirit of Christ. *The faith of Christ* not unfrequently stands for faith in Christ, comp. Eph. iii. 12. We must not expound: True and faith toward me. For πίστις, as fidelity, never occurs in the New Testament, and the expression, "Thou hast not denied my name," in ch. iii. 8, corresponds. After: in which Antipas, my faithful witness, is simply to be supplied: proved himself to be such, delivered his testimony. In this Hebraistic abbreviation (a similar one occurs, for example in Gen. xiv. 1, 2), many copyists have lost themselves; and hence, they have either left out, "in which," or, "who." Luther adopts the latter reading: even in the days, in which Antipas my faithful witness was slain by you. Bengel remarks on the expression, "even in the days," "the great trial is sometimes experienced both in the evil and the good. He who despises, as Esau did with his birth-right, is in danger of suffering an irreparable injury; he who walks uprightly, as Abraham did in the offering up of Isaac, as Phinehas with his spear, as Joshua and Caleb, to him will it be reckoned for a perpetual blessing. In this manner a preceding valorous conduct is placed to the account of the angel of this church. Dear reader, when special circumstances befal you, consider well with yourself. In peaceful times it is easy to confess the name of Christ; but it is another thing in times that endanger the very life, and where a hard conflict has to be maintained, to deny not Christ but one's self."—According to the com-

1 Pliny, H. N. L. v. c. 33: Longeque clarissimum Asiae Pergamum.—Pergamena vocatur ejus tractus jurisdictio. Ad eam conveniunt Thyatireni, Mygdones, Mosyni, etc., aliaeque in honorae civitates. Comp. Strabo, L. xiii. p. 623: Ἔχει δέ τινα ἡγεμονίαν πρὸς τόπους τούτους τὸ Πέργαμον, ἐπιφανὴς πόλις καὶ πολὺν συνευτυχήσασα χρονον τοῖς Ἀτταλικοῖς βασιλεῦσι.

mon opinion, Antipas is the proper name of a man who suffered death in the persecution of the time. But there are strong reasons for deciding otherwise. All other names in the Apocalypse are of a symbolical character. No historical Antipas is to be found, unless the name is to be regarded as such here. We find in the epistles the symbolical names of the Nicolaitans and of Jezebel. Farther, in a period of general bloody persecution, only such a person could be specially noticed as occupied an important position in the church—one who enjoyed an apostolical, or almost apostolical dignity. But it must appear extraordinary that no mention is made in history of an Antipas. For that the notices which we possess regarding him of very late origin, are pure inventions, is as clear as day. Tertullian adv. Gnos. c. 12, drew his knowledge of Antipas merely from this passage. There has been no want of expositors, who have viewed the name as a symbolical one. Saskerides, an expositor of the Reformed church, explains it as meaning one who is against all. There can be no doubt of the justness of this derivation. Antipas is formed precisely as Antichrist, and probably in imitation of it. A commentary on the Antipas, as similar to Antikosmos, is given by Jer. xx. 10, xv. 10, "Ah! my mother, that thou hast borne me, a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole land." If we have been followed thus far, it will not be reckoned too bold if we should hazard the supposition, that Timothy was the person here designated Antipas. The two names "Fear God," and "Against all," are closely connected with each other. One cannot truly fear God without standing forth against the world, which lies in wickedness, and having it also standing against us—comp. Jas. iv. 4, Acts iv. 19, v. 29. Elsewhere also in the New Testament we find stress laid on the name, as in Acts iv. 36, and particularly in John's Gospel, ch. ix. 7. He puts his own name also in connection with the love of Jesus toward him, ch. xiii. 23. Allusion is probably made here in ch. ii. 9 to the name of Polycarp; and in ch. iii. 1 a similar allusion to the name has with great probability been supposed to be made. The martyrdom of Timothy (comp. Tillemont mem. II. 1, p. 266), places his death in the year 97, when John was still at Patmos, and represents it as following on an affair, in which he truly showed the spirit of an Antipas: on a public solemnity he must set himself in

strenuous opposition to heathenish disorder. The circumstance of the scene being transferred to Ephesus, is easily explained from the influence of the New Testament reports. It is not improbable that Timothy, when John took up his abode at Ephesus, removed to one of the two other chief cities in Asia, in order there to undertake the immediate oversight of the church, as being both important in itself and endangered by the prevalence of false teachers.

Ver. 14. *But I have a little against thee, that thou hast there those that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught for Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things offered to idols and to commit fornication.* Bengel: "By this it is indicated, that if the angel of the church had done his part, the vexatious Balaamites would either not have come up, or would have been again put down. Oh! if a pastor in the present day considers what sort of people he has to do with, he must be appalled!" The blame is represented as a little thing. It shows that the angel himself was pure and free from any participation in the dangerous heresies, only that his resistance of these should have been more energetic. Such a representation could not have been given of the angel of the church at Ephesus; he had himself fallen from his first love. Instead of, *for* Balak, Luther has, *through* Balak, following an incorrect reading: ἐν τῷ Βαλάκ. It properly means, who taught to Balak. According to the common opinion, this must be a Hebraistic expression for Balak. But in ver. 20 we find the verb to teach construed quite regularly with the accusative; and this is done also in the Hebrew with the solitary exception of Job xxi. 22. We must rather suppose, that to "Balak" is as much as, in the interest of Balak, or for pleasing Balak. Bengel even in his day drew attention to the fact, that this Dativus commodi occurs very often in the history of Balaam: curse to me this people, etc. The history is quite silent about Balaam's teaching Balak. It is said in Numb. xxxi. 16, as a reason why Moses reproved the army sent forth against the Midianite host for neglect of duty in sparing the women, "Lo, it was these, who at the word of Balaam taught the children of Israel unfaithfulness toward the Lord in the matter of Peor, and judgment came forth upon the congregation of the Lord." It was, therefore, the women whom Balaam taught. Here it is not

expressly said, whom he taught, but there is to be supplied from the connection: Balak's people. According to Numb. xxiv. 25, indeed, Balaam no more met with Balak—see my work on Balaam. The last look of Balaam was directed toward Balak; expecting to obtain from him the reward, when the stratagem succeeded. But he did not venture to apply directly to him. The charge here undoubtedly has respect to existing relations. As remarked by Bengel, "The Balaamites at Pergamos also courted the favour of heathens in high rank." The same trait, which appears in these false teachers, of seeking to win the favour of ethnicizing heathens (as indeed the breaking down of the limits between the church and the world is in all ages the consequence of such designs), discovers itself even in the epistles of Peter and Jude. In 2 Peter ii. 15, it is said, "They follow after the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." And in Jude ver. 16, "Their mouth speaks proud words, and they have respect of persons for the sake of profit." *To cast a stumbling-block* before the children of Israel, was to employ a temptation by which they might be made to fall, or be brought to destruction; comp. Isa. viii. 15. In reference to the expressions of "eating things offered to idols and committing fornication," Herder remarks: the temptation they occasioned did not consist in a literal eating of things offered to idols but licentiousness; for this is only a symbol drawn from the history of Balaam. In whatever manner they caused stumbling and defiled the sanctuary with heathenish pollutions, they were Balaamites; that is, they were seducers, idolators, whoremongers." But this is only so far right, as among the different kinds of participation in heathenish ways those are here brought specially into notice, which made their appearance even in primitive times. It admits of historical proof, that these very forms of corruption were currently practised by the heretics, whom John has in view, nay that with such they occupied the foreground. To eat things offered to idols or not to eat them, was even in St Paul's time the Shibboleth between the lax and the stricter party at Corinth (1 Cor. x.) At that time, those who ate stood upon the ground of being permitted to do so, from the insight they had obtained into the nothingness of idolatry, and from their Christian liberty. But at a later period, the eating of such offerings was defended

by the Gnostics, on the ground of that free and mighty spirit they possessed, which nothing could defile, which might handle and taste every thing, nay must do so, in order to give proof of its invincible power; and on the ground also of a false spiritualism, which held everything corporeal to be indifferent. The Jew Trypho in Justin throws it out as a reproach against the Christians, that many of them ate things offered to idols, under the pretext that it did them no harm (Dial. Tryp. 35.) Justin's reply is, that they who did so, Marcianites, Valentinianians, &c., were only Christian in name, and had no proper connection with Christ and his church. The latter, therefore, could not be answerable for what they did. In Eusebius IV. 7 it is stated, as matter of reproach against Basilides, that he had taught it was an indifferent action, if in times of persecution one should taste what had been offered to idols, or had unwarily abjured the faith. And that the Gnostics did not stand even at this, that without any plea of necessity they participated in the heathen festivals and idol offerings, is clear from Irenæus I. 6, "They eat without hesitation the idol-offerings, because they do not reckon themselves to be thereby defiled. And at every festive diversion of the heathen, which they observe in honour of their gods, they are the first to assemble." Fornication also appears in the resolution of the council at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 20), in connection with the idolatrous feasts, as something which the Christians might easily be supposed to fall into from their contact with heathenism. From the licentious character of the heathen festivals it went hand in hand with the eating of things offered to idols. Irenæus, in the passage already referred to, reproaches the Gnostics, after having mentioned their eating of what was offered to idols, with giving full satisfaction to the lusts of the flesh, and proceeds to speak of their licentiousness. According to Eusebius, B. IV. c. 7, those who went farthest even taught "that the basest deeds should be perpetrated by those who would attain to a perfect insight into their secret doctrine." "Those people availed themselves of the wicked spirit as a helper, in order to make such as were deceived by him the miserable slaves of corruption; whilst to the unbelieving heathen they gave great occasion to slander the true religion, as the ill report proceeding from them imparted a bad odour to Christianity at large."

Ver. 15. *So hast thou also those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans likewise.* The sense is, So and in like manner as Balaam formerly taught and his disciples found, hast thou also those who hold fast by the doctrine of the Balaamites of the present time. The *likewise* (which many copyists did not understand, and hence out of ὁμοίως made ὃ μισῶ ; Luther : which I hate, as for a similar reason some expositors would connect it with the following verse), corresponds to the *so*, and it is added for the purpose of rendering prominent the abnormal, the surprising and frightful nature of the fact, that now again an evil should have become rife, which had formerly and for all times been so decisively marked with the divine judgment. According to some expositors the angel must here be reproved for having, beside the Balaamites, a second class of heretics, the Nicolaitans, in his church. They explain *so*, by just as well as the Balaamites, and *thou hast also*, by not less than the angel at Ephesus. But this exposition is on every account untenable. What sort of writing would it be : So (as the Balaamites) hast thou also (as the angel at Ephesus), and then again the *likewise*, which must refer back to the Balaamites ! The *so* and the *likewise* would be a mere Pleonasm, if the Balaamites and the Nicolaitans were different. The reference of the *also* to the angel at Ephesus is inadmissible. For not to mention, that the epistle to the angel of the church at Smyrna comes between, the angel at Ephesus had no Nicolaitans, but had driven them out of his community, and nothing more remained for him to do in this respect, he is charged with no blame, nor is any call addressed to him to repent. According to the view in question, we should know only the doctrine of the Balaamites, only the name of the Nicolaitans, which cannot possibly be supposed. The next verse too decides against it. The *with them* there shews, that in ver. 14 and 15 it must be the same enemies of the truth that are spoken of. For, it would be quite unsuitable to have two different parties abruptly thrown together, and one of them thrown out again. The sword mentioned there has reference to the fate of Balaam, and loses its significance if the intervening Nicolaitans are different from the Balaamites : the Balaamite doom shall follow the Balaamite guilt. So that it is quite plain, from the whole passage, that the Nicolaitans are those who hold by the doctrine of Balaam, and conse-

quently that we are right in the explanation we formerly gave of the name.

Ver. 16. *Repent, therefore; but if not, I will come to thee quickly, and will fight with them by the sword of my mouth.* The *therefore*, which rests on the best authorities (comp. ver. 5, iii. 3, 19), is omitted by Luther. The *quickly* Bengel would remove without sufficient external proof, perhaps, in favour of a pre-established opinion. He says also, "If men, especially pastors, rebuke the evil, the Lord Jesus will spare them, so as not to visit them with rebuke; but if they are careless and negligent, he will come the more sharply against them." If the angel listening to the admonition exercised repentance, and showed greater zeal, many of the heretics, or, at least, of those who had been deceived by them, would still be delivered. But in that case the Lord would not have come to him, so as to have rendered the appearance, which was intended for the properly guilty party, a subject of terror also to him. Bengel: "Neither here nor elsewhere does the Lord add what he would himself do to the angel of the church. But the conflict with the Balaamites would bring punishment to him also. Till now the angel could not say with Paul, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men" (Acts xx. 26); and so he must tremble, when he thought of Ez. iii. 17, ss., to which Paul alludes, at the words: I will fight with them. If he did his duty, the backsliders would either be reclaimed to the truth, or they would be expelled from the church. The expression: "I come to thee quickly, and will fight with them," to one not acquainted with the language of Scripture, might seem to indicate a visible appearance of the Lord, and a palpable execution of judgment by him. But the Lord often, and indeed usually, exercises his power secretly; and it is the method of Scripture to designate by such strong expressions even that concealed action, in order to rouse fleshly security out of its indolent slumber.—The fighting with the sword of the Lord's mouth, as we have said, refers to the history of Balaam. "Like sin, like punishment." In Numb. xxxi. 8, it is said, "And the kings of Midian they slew upon their dead, Evi, etc., the five kings of Midian; and Balaam, the son of Beor, they killed with the sword." In Josh. xiii. 22, "And Balaam, the son of Beor, the enchanter, did the children

of Israel kill with the sword, to their slain." The author of the seductive plan and the seducers alike fell by the sword of the Israelites. That behind this was concealed the avenging sword of God and of his Logos, appears from Numb. xxii. 23, "And the ass saw the angel of the Lord in the way, and his drawn sword in his hand." Numb. xxxi. 8 stands related to this as the fulfilment to the threatening.[1]

Ver. 17. *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches: He that overcomes, to him will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it.* The words: to him will I give to eat, makes allusion to the eating of the idol-offerings. "On this heavenly bread," says Bengel, "they must lose their relish for the things offered to idols. In the world men are in many ways guilty of imprudence in their desires to make trial of this and that; but whosoever yields himself up in the denial of self and of fleshly delights, he will come to experience much in spiritual, heavenly, supernatural things, of which others must be deprived." In John vi. Christ represents himself as the true manna, which his people partake of, and obtain thereby life everlasting. Here, the manna is the life itself, consisting, however, in nothing else than close fellowship with Christ. Such free allusions indicate still more clearly the identity of the author than the most explicit agreements. For, in the latter there is the possibility of a borrowing. Manna was the wilderness-food of the Israelites, which ceased when they reached Canaan (comp. John vi. 31); and according to the typology of Scripture, the wilderness corresponds to this life, and the possession of Canaan to the next. Accordingly, some expositors refer this first promise to what the Lord imparts to his people in this life, and the second to the future recompense; as also, indeed, in 1 John iii 1, 2, we find set beside each other what Christians have now ("that we are the children of God"), and what they shall receive hereafter ("we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.") So Bossuet: "Manna is nourishment in the wilderness, and the secret consolation with which God supports his children during the pilgrimage of this

[1] At Numb. xxxi. 8 the Sept. version has, not μάχαιρα, but, as here, ῥομφαία.

life." But against this view is the condition, "he who overcomes," which can only refer to the completed victory, and is explained in ver. 26 by the additional words, "and keeps my works to the end." So also the analogy of the other concluding promises, which all have respect to the life to come. Hence we must suppose, that the character of the manna as food for the wilderness is here left out of view, and only its character as *heavenly* food taken into account (comp. Ps. lxxviii. 24, cv. 40, John vi. 32), in contrast to the poor enjoyments which the earth yields for the satisfaction of the flesh. Still, the promise does not on this account lose its reference to the present life. Scripture knows nothing of an absolute contrast between the present and the future. According to its mode of contemplation, there is only a completing there of whatever has been begun here, and he only that already has, shall have given to *him* hereafter—comp. John iv. 14, v. 24.—The manna is represented as *hidden*. This predicate has not respect to the natural manna, which is rather the manifest, the palpable, but only to the spiritual, to the blessed life in fellowship with Christ, "the sweetness of which the world knoweth not, and no one knoweth saving he that tasteth it." We may compare the hidden treasure in the field, Matt. xiii. 44, and Col. iii. 3, "Our life is hid with Christ in God." The foretaste of this hidden manna is given to the faithful in this present life. What the Lord said to his still inexperienced disciples, "I have a bread to eat which ye know not" (John iv. 32), they may repeat before the world. As the eating of the manna, so this designation of the manna itself as the hidden is employed with reference to the Nicolaitans; and in such a manner, that what in this first promise forms only a subordinate point, becomes the main one in the second, and that the predicate which is here attributed to the manna is the link of connection between the two promises. The Gnostics wished to introduce something of the heathen mysteries into Christianity; they boasted, in the spirit that has ever characterised worldly wisdom, of possessing what was hidden and known to none but themselves, and thereby drew many after them. As heavenly stand opposed to their sensual enjoyments, so do the true and important secrets to their false and miserable ones. And the connection of both references with each other is the more natural, as with the Gnostics there existed a combina-

tion of sensual lust and trafficking in mysteries, and their pretended discoveries especially had fleshly-indulgence for their object.

The words, *I will give him a white stone*, are isolated by many expositors, and regarded as a promise apart by itself. But this is entirely unsuitable. The promise can be only a double one here, else were the number twelve destroyed. If the *white stone* is supposed to have been named only as writing material, the promises of the verse are united together by the bond of the secretness belonging to both. But if, on the other hand, an independent value is attached to the white stone, the promises fall asunder. The new name is written on the white stone. But the white stone cannot first have a separate worth of its own, and then again serve as means to an end. If this last cannot be denied, then the first must be abandoned. Further, if we ascribe to the words an independent value, they would contain a reference to a heathenish custom, as all are agreed who do so. The supposition of such a reference, however, we must be extremely cautious of admitting generally into the Revelation; and the more so here, as this supposed second promise in any case is closely intertwined with the third, which bears a genuine Israelitish stamp. (Ewald even could not avoid remarking: More Graeco mire cum Hebraeo mixto.) Then, the reference to the heathenish custom here would want the necessary clearness and explicitness, as appears alone from the diversity of opinions adopted by the expositors as to what custom was really in the eye of the prophet. Finally, we obtain from this view no satisfactory meaning. What would most readily occur are the judicial stones; but the objection to this is, that the white or exculpatory stones of the judges were not given to the accused, but cast into an urn. In that case too, it would be acquittal before the divine tribunal that would be marked. But this, from the connection, would be too small a boon, and wants, besides, the reference to the Nicolaitans, which undeniably exists in what precedes and follows, and which is also continually found in the promises made to the churches that were infested by these heretics.—We must, then, connect the words closely with what follows. The antiquarian element that comes here into consideration is simply the fact, that in ancient times they were wont to write much on small

stones. To the new glorious name corresponds the white stone. The λευκός, white, is not, as used in the Apocalypse, the simple white, the colour of innocence, but the shining white; comp. on ch. iv. 4. "The word *new*," says Bengel, "is a truly apocalyptic word: new name, new song, new heavens, new earth, new Jerusalem, all new, ch. xiv. 3, iii. 12, xxi. 2." The word has a sweet sound for those, by whom the *old* has been felt burdensome and oppressive. It is derived from Isa. lxii. 2, "And the heathen see thy righteousness and all kings thy glory; and thou art called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken;" comp. ch. lxv. 15, "And he will give to his servants another name." Neither here, nor in the fundamental passages, is any particular name meant; otherwise, it would certainly have been mentioned. It is enough, that the name is a new one, that it is much more glorious than the old one, that the state which it indicates has nothing in common with the earlier one, so full of tribulation, hunger, thirst, heat, and tears. Parallel is ch. iii. 12, "And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem—and my name the new." There, to whom the conqueror in the new state of things belongs, here, the new name which he himself receives. In 1 John iii. 2 the new state which is expressed by the new name, is described by the words, "But we know that, when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." No one knows the new name but he who receives it. It is a secret unspeakably more precious than the secrets of the Nicolaitans, so much praised and yet so worthless. The name of Christ in ch. xix. 12 corresponds, as being one which no one knows but himself. Also, according to 1 John iii. 1, 2, the blessed state of Christians, what now belongs to them, and much more than that, what they shall possess hereafter, is one that the world cannot understand—one that, with all its boasted knowledge, it so little understands, as still to be ignorant of God, and Christ, and those who believe upon his name (John xv. 21, xvi. 3.)

THE EPISTLE TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA.

(Ch. ii. 18—29.)

One of the roads formed by the Romans from Pergamos to Sardis led by Thyatira, which the apostle could not but have travelled in his earlier visitation-rounds, and which he now again walked in the Spirit. It lay fifty-eight miles from Pergamos toward the south-east, and from Sardis thirty-six miles toward the north-west. Thyatira, according to Strabo, was a colony of Macedonians, and, on that account, from the constant intercourse it gave rise to with the mother country, it is perhaps to be explained, that we find Lydia the seller of purple from Thyatira at Philippi, Acts xvi. 14. From this Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things spoken by Paul, probably arose the first beginnings of the church at Thyatira. She is named in the Acts a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, not *from* the city, and was therefore still at Thyatira; and if as a traveller she formed with her house a centre (Acts xvi. 40), it was the more to be expected, that she would afterwards at her proper home labour with zeal and success. We might, perhaps, regard the woman Jezebel as her Satanic counterpart. The Nicolaitans in the church at Thyatira had attained to greater power and importance than at Ephesus and at Pergamos. "Here," remarks Züllig, "much sharper and stronger threatenings are uttered against those adversaries of the good cause than in the preceding epistle." This is explained from the character of the angel of this church. The angel at Thyatira formed a contrast to that at Ephesus. As the spiritual life of the latter had spent itself too partially in the defence of orthodoxy, the vindication of pure and sound doctrine, so the angel of Thyatira, in accordance with the female origin of the church, exhausted his energy in works of love, and showed himself weak in those duties of his office, in which the angel at Ephesus had shown himself strong. Bengel: "The one could not bear the evil and hated the works of the Nicolaitans, but left his first love and his first works; but the other was rich in love and had always abundance of works, though he did not resist the evil doers with becoming vigour.

The former, not the latter, is upbraided as having fallen, and commanded to repent; but the Lord has something against both."

Ver. 18. *And to the angel of the church at Thyatira*[1] *write: These things saith the Son of God, who has eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like to clear brass.* The three predicates form the ground at once of the threatening and of the promise. The prophet shows those, who from fear of the power of heathenism were weak towards the Nicolaitans or even inclined to go along with them, one whom they ought much more to fear, and who can give both victory and glory. The first predicate itself exhibits a terrible character. For in the passage, which forms the foundation for this name of Christ, he appears as one who smites the heathen with an iron sceptre and dashes them in pieces as a potter's vessel. Bengel: "The glorious name, Son of God, has been most fully disclosed in the second Psalm, and to that Psalm reference is also made in ver. 27 of this epistle." The verse before us forms a commentary on the name. The eyes as a flame of fire, and the clear brass, are from ch. i. 14. The flame of fire does not bring to light, as Bengel falsely interprets here, but consumes. Bengel remarks on the feet as of clear brass: "It threatens secure persons who think they can do what they please, and when impiety in them rises to the highest pitch, they tread the Son of God under foot. But he will himself tread his enemies under his feet, and will make them as the mire of the street."

Ver. 19. *I know thy love and thy faith; and thy service and thy patience; and thy last works more than the first.* Here also the senseless desire after uniformity has introduced, after "I know," "thy works and." Then, the desire for brevity has thought that the *service* must be omitted together with the *love*. These corruptions, which are discovered to be such by strong external grounds, have been admitted into Luther's translation. We have here a threefold pair before us—love and faith, service and patience, the first and the last works. If we do not keep by this pair-like arrangement, the faith separates in an improper

1 The Cod. Alex. has merely τῷ ἐν Θυατείροις, to the angel that is in Thyatira. That the reading arose from a desire of abbreviation, appears from Tertullian Scorp. 12: ad angelum ecclesiae Thyatirenorum, comp. with de pudicitia c. 19: ad angelum Thyatirenorum.

way the love and its manifestation, the service or deaconship-agency from each other, and the patience remains indeterminate and swims in the air. Love forms the prominent feature. Therefore it stands first. Faith is only paired with love, since this, wherever it is worthy of the name, springs from faith as its root —comp. 1 Tim. i. 5. The love here also is not to be limited (comp. on ver. 4.) Still the second pair shows how it exercised itself. The deaconship-service, the Christian ministration of help to the members of the church (comp. 1 Cor. xvi. 15), was much attended to amid the various discharge of official duties in Thyatira, "so much so, indeed, that the other official members of the church wrought into the hands of those commonly called deacons (since in Acts vi.), whose place in this church we have to think of as standing very high. That the patience here, as in ver. 2, is *active* patience, is evident, from its connection with the deaconship. And this same connection shows that here also, as in ver. 2, the discourse is of perseverance in a definite sphere. By the works, according to the connection, are to be understood pre-eminently works of love. A reference is here made to 2 Pet. ii. 20, "For, if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the first." The close of the verse before us stands in literal agreement with these last words, excepting that instead of *χείρονα*, worse, there is *πλείονα*, very similar in sound, though directly opposite in sense. The allusion can the less be regarded as accidental, as in St Peter also the subject of discourse has respect to the Nicolaitans, and to these the prophet comes in what immediately follows; *q. d.* that does not hold of thee, which is true of the Nicolaitans. If thou hast unfortunately left them too much freedom, if thou hast sinned in not opposing them with sufficient vigour, they still cannot deprive thee of thy glory. The passage in Peter again rests on Matth. xii. 45.

Ver. 20. *But I have against thee, that thou sufferest thy wife Jezebel, who says she is a prophetess, and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication and to eat things offered to idols.* After, "I have against thee," some codices have introduced "little," (Lüther: "I have a small thing against thee"), and others "much;" but the most and best have neither

the one nor the other. The origin of both readings is explained from ver. 14, even that of the latter. The feeling, that the style here is sharper than in the preceding epistle, gave rise to the opinion, that a contrast to the *small* there, was here in its proper place. Other departures from the genuine reading have been occasioned by the harsh and unclassical character of the construction.[1] In particular, people could not understand, the "thou sufferest" (namely, to teach and seduce), and "she teaches;" comp. ch. xi. 3, "And I shall give my two witnesses (to prophecy) and they shall prophecy." But the most important deviation has been, that frequently for "*thy* wife," is substituted "the woman," which Luther also has adopted. That the external reasons in support of the first reading greatly preponderate, is clear alone from its admission into the text of Lachmann. How the omission of the *thy* took place, may be learned from De Wette, who rejects it as "unsuitable." How should any one have thought of thrusting in this *thy*, the cross of expositors, into the text, if it had not originally existed? It is enough, that it still remains untouched in so many and such important critical helps. Bengel remarks on the expression, *thou sufferest*: "There are people, who have a hearty love for the good, and occupy themselves with all that is lovely, delight in it and rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ as their portion. But the evil may still for them have its progress." Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of Zidon, the wife of Ahab of Israel, who as a murderer of the prophets, introduced the worship of idols into Israel, is after Balaam the second chief representative in Old Testament times of the heathenish seduction that found its way into the church of the Lord. There can be no manner of doubt, that it is not some particular seductive woman, who is designated by the name of Jezebel, as manifesting somewhat of her nature in the church at Thyatira; but that the Jezebel was a symbolical person, the personified heresy and heathenish false doctrine; so that 1 John iv. 1, "Many false prophets have gone out into the world," as to meaning exactly corresponds. To this conclusion, first, the whole character of the seven epistles points; for to this it would be

1 The received text: Ὅτι ἐᾷς τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζαβὴλ τὴν λέγουσαν ἑαυτὴν προφῆτην, διδάσκειν καὶ πλανᾶσθαι ἐμοὺς δούλους, at first sight betrays this to have been its origin.

quite foreign to introduce such minute particulars, as a reference here would be to a "certain woman." Certainly, "it has nothing against it, to suppose that there was a woman at Thyatira," etc.; but it has a great deal against it, that John should have assigned so important a place to such a woman in a book consecrated to the church of all times. Farther, the analogy of Balaam leads in the same direction, as to this corresponded not a single individual in the prophet's own time, but a whole class of false teachers. Then, the mention of adulteries and children in ver. 22 and 23, with which even those who defend the reference to a "certain influential woman," have no patience; De Wette, for example, who remarks, that "her children, can scarcely be taken in the natural sense, but must mean scholars, followers." But it is quite decisive, that here the discourse is not indefinitely of a woman, but of the wife of the angel. If it is a fixed point, that the angel is an ideal person, or a collective, then under the woman we cannot understand a single individual. We must rather understand by it the weaker half (1 Pet. iii. 7), that part of the governing body who were infected with the heresy, whether it might be, that there were such among those, who actually held office, or that these, represented by the angel, had false teachers beside them, who exercised a considerable influence on the church, and in point of fact had a share in the direction. Jezebel is represented as one, who said, that she was a prophetess. We have already drawn attention to the false pretensions to inspiration, which were put forth by the Gnostics at the first. Vitringa has shewn, that in a certain sense the Old Jezebel assumed the character of a false prophetess. To this especially points the enchantments attributed to her, 2 Kings ix. 22, the enthusiastical conduct of the servants of the Baal-worship which she introduced with fanatical zeal, and the fact, that her father, according to a fragment of Menander's translation from the Tyrian annals in Josephus, was originally high-priest of Astarte. Little as we can think of identifying the angel with the church, we are still farther prevented from doing so by the circumstance, that the wife also of the angel calls herself a prophetess, teaches and seduces, and the laity, who adhere to the false doctrine, are distinguished from her. That the committing of fornication forms the commencement here otherwise than in ver. 14, is to be ex-

plained from the circumstance, that in reference to the Old Jezebel the history makes express mention only of adultery; whereas in reference to Balaam the seducing also to eat of things offered to idols is mentioned. In 2 Kings ix. 22, Jehu's answer to the question of Joram, "Is there peace, Jehu?" was, "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts continue?" There it is primarily spiritual fornication that is meant; but this went hand in hand with the bodily, especially in the worship of demoniacal excitement, like that which was promoted by Jezebel; and 2 Kings ix. 30, compared with Jer. iv. 30 shews, that in Jezebel's case also this connection existed. The fornication here, too, bears this double meaning. If this is not kept in mind both here and in ver. 21, the transition in ver. 22, where the discourse comes to be of spiritual adultery, will be too sharp.

Ver. 21. *And I have given her time to repent, and she will not repent of her fornication.*, The destination to punishment is regarded as a seal of her impenitence, which God sets upon her bad conduct. John lays open another point of view. Bengel: "The adulteress was hardened, her deceived followers were expressly called to repentance: the spiritual overseer will then himself, with his abiding good sense, come right."

Ver. 22. *Behold I throw her into a bed, and those who commit fornication with her into great tribulation, if they do not repent of their works.* Ver. 23. *And her children will I put to death; and all churches shall know, that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give to every one among you according to your works.* "From the bed of infamy they shall be brought to a sick-bed of pain," Bengel. The following expression: into great tribulation, serves as an explanation. On the words: they who commit adultery with her, comp. Ez. xxiii. 37, "with their idols they have committed adultery." Any one that grew familiar with these antichrists, broke the covenant which had been made with God in Christ. Several expositors would distinguish between the adulterers and the children, understanding by the first the assistants, by the others the scholars. But it is better to understand by the adulterers and children, the followers and children. As the governing body

only had teachers formed by the woman, the distinction is too fine a one, the difference too impalpable. In the Old Testament the children stand for the recipients of false doctrine generally; comp. Isa. lvii. 3, "Ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore," a passage to which special reference is probably made here. Through the poetical representations of the Old Testament such figurative expressions had become so naturalized, that even in prose they occur in the New Testament. John calls the believers of his diocese his children, 3 John 4, as Peter also names Mark his son. In his second epistle John personifies a church as a woman (so also Peter in 1 Pet. v. 13), comp. 3 John 9, the associated church as a sister, and its members as children, comp. ver. 13, "The children of thine elect sister greet thee."—Instead of: I will put to death, it is literally, I will kill with death. Many expositors would here understand by death the pestilence. But this is never designated so (comp. on ch. vi. 8), and such a meaning does not properly suit here with the eyes of flaming fire, and the feet as of glowing brass, nor to what is said in the Old Testament of the death of the literal Jezebel. The appended expression, "with death," must be regarded as showing the earnestness there was in the threatening, just as one says, to burn with fire, in order to place vividly before the eye the scorching heat of the fire.[1]—The word, and shall *know*, must be regarded as emphatic. It forms an irony on their *gnosis*, comp. the "have known" in ver. 24, and the common use of *knowing* in the first epistle of John. This would be a profitable gnosis, instead of that unprofitable sort, which they lauded. They should help all churches in Christendom to the right gnosis, and must do so, though in a very different manner from what they wished to have done. For, apart from the judgment of God in their personal experience, the Lord has made an end of their error, while the simple divine truth constantly blooms forth anew. The object of that profitable gnosis is, that Christ "searches the reins and hearts." The original passage is Ps. vii. 9, "Let the

[1] Allusion is made to the Mosaic formula מות ימות, which is particularly used in reference to adultery, comp. Lev. xx. 10, "The man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, he shall die the death, both adulterer and adulteress." The phrase ἐν θανάτῳ serves the same purpose as there the prefixed infin. LXX.: Θανάτῳ θανατοῦσθωσαν.

wickedness of the wicked come to an end; and establish thou the righteous, and prover of the hearts and reins art thou, O righteous God." "It is God," remarks Bengel, "who, as is also testified in the Old Testament, searches the hearts and reins, and this divine property the Lord Jesus Christ here ascribes to himself." The *proving* in the original passage, and here also the *searching* comes into view, not as an indication of the divine omniscience, but of the divine righteousness. The words point to God's righteousness, according to which he does not keep himself in a state of indifference toward good and evil, but constantly exercises the divine energy, which can penetrate into the very inmost heart, in order to discern both the one and the other, and to visit it accordingly with blessing or with punishment. Comp. Jer. xvii. 10, xx. 12. The practical character of the searching of the hearts and reins shows itself here in the giving to each according to his works. Perhaps here also there is some reference to Gnosticism. The Gnostics expressed themselves with great contempt of *common* Christians, as persons who stood merely at superficial attainments, while they themselves penetrated into the innermost nature of things—comp. ver. 24. Now, however, they must have to do with one, who can penetrate into their inmost being, and how shall they tremble before him, since even their exterior presents so many spots and blemishes! On the words, "I will give—according to your works," Bengel remarks, "We shall not easily find a saying that more frequently occurs in Scripture than this; Ps. lxii. 13, Matt. xvi. 27, Rom. ii. 6." It is especially appropriate in the presence of the lawless, 2 Pet. iii. 17, who think that they can do what they please.

Ver. 24. *But to you I say, the others that are at Thyatira, who have not such doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will not throw upon you another burden.* Ver. 25. *But what you have received hold fast till I come.* Instead of, "to you the others," Luther follows the reading, "you and the others." According to this there would come forth, behind the ideal oneness of the angel, the concealed real manifoldness: to you, my true *servants* in the church and the *members* of it. But the shoving in of the *and* has too little of external support to justify its adoption. The others are, therefore, those who have kept themselves free from the teaching

of Jezebel. "The bad state of matters at Thyatira, "remarks Bengel," is ascribed not to them, but only to the overseer, as also at Ephesus and at Pergamos the Lord holds the overseers responsible for the evil." The Gnostics, probably taking occasion from 1 Cor. ii. 10, were constantly keeping the *depths* in their mouth, perpetually talking about going into the depths with Satan, not less than with God.[1] But only in respect to Satan did they in a certain measure attain to this. While they set forth the principle that one must, in order to know the depths of Satan, become familiar with everything shameful, they at least succeeded practically in getting an intimate acquaintance with Satan. The nature of these Satanic studies of the older Gnosticism is made plain to us by what is said in Eusebius, II. 13, of the Simonians, "those deeper secrets, of which they say that he who hears them for the first time would be astonished and confounded, are in truth full of things, at which one must be astonished, full of folly and madness. They are of such a nature that a discreet person cannot write of them, nor open his lips about them on account of their horrid filthiness and obscenity." This was the theoretical result of their practical inquiries. According to the current explanation the expression, "as they speak," must only refer to the *depths*, and John puts Satan in the place of God. So Bengel: "The false teachers said, that what they taught were *deep* things. This the Lord admits, but with the addition, that they were not divine but Satanic depths—just as he had conceded to the Jews the name of a synagogue, but a synagogue of Satan, ver. 9." But it is arbitrary and without example to refer the words, "as they speak," which are also wanting at the synagogue of Satan, merely to the depths. Nor is the thought thus obtained at all suitable, as the heretics did not confine themselves in their knowledge to the depths of God, but rather stretched their Gnosis over all points of Christian doctrine, and even to Satan himself. The chief point must lie in the having *known*, which the heretics took in an exalted and laudable sense, but which the

1 Comp. Tertullian adv. Valent. c. 1.: Si bona fide quaeras, concreto vultu, suspenso supercilio, *altum* est aiunt. Iren. I. 1: Καὶ ταῦτα εἶναι τὰ μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστὰ καὶ ἀπόῤῥητα μυστήρια. II. 38: Vere caecutientis, qui profunda Bythi adinvenisse se dicunt. c. 39: Profunda dei adinvinesse se dicentes. c. 48: Irrationabiliter autem inflati audaciter dei mysteria scire vos dicitis.

apostle used in a low and scandalous one. That their knowledge only of the depths of Satan is here mentioned, was owing to the circumstance, that here the horse-foot in them became particularly manifest.—By the *other burden* most expositors understand a new suffering. Bengel: "He who is plagued in one part, will on this account have something withheld from him in other respects. Christ will not let too heavy a burden come upon any of his own." But in opposition to this view, there is the circumstance, that in the preceding context nothing had been said of a burden in this sense, which the Christians at Thyatira had already borne, or were yet to bear. Against Bengel's remark, that they "had a sufficient burden in Jezebel and her followers," it is enough to say, that the existence of heretics in the church had been represented in the preceding context as a matter of guilt. Reference has been made to the *patience* in ver. 19, but only by a false style of exposition. The threatening has respect simply to the apostate party, not to the true. The other burden, which was not to be laid upon them, must therefore form the contrast to what they now had and should hold fast. Our Lord says in Matt. xxiii. 4 of the Pharisees, "They bind heavy and intolerable burdens, and lay them upon the necks of men." In Acts xv. 10, Peter says to the Judaizers, "Wherefore, then, do you tempt God by laying on the necks of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." Now, it was an artifice of the lawless party, that by an abuse of St Paul's doctrine of liberty (comp. 2 Pet. ii. 19 with iii. 16) they were constantly ready with the charge of Judaism and Pharisaism; that they applied to the moral law what bore respect only to the ceremonial law. (Mark: Cantilena scil. perpetua impuri gregis erat Christiana libertas, quam praedicabant et praetexebant suis impuritatibus.) In opposition to them Christ says: They are always speaking of burdens which one seeks to lay upon you. I will lay upon you no other burden; but one is indispensable, that ye hold by the command which ye have received from the beginning. This does not admit of your flying off with the lawless under the pretext of Christian liberty; for whosoever releases himself arbitrarily from this "burden," he will have occasion to repent of it bitterly at my appearance for judgment. Receiving to yourselves such a burden, you shall lose salvation.—There is a striking re-

ference to the decree of the apostolic council at Jerusalem, in which also Paul had a part, Acts xv. 28, 29, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you none other burden (*βάρος*), but only these necessary things, that ye keep yourselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication, from which, if ye keep yourselves, ye do well." There, among other things, the eating of things offered to idols, and fornication, were interdicted, which the lawless party gave out for an unprofitable burden.—On ver. 25 comp. 1 John ii. 24, "Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning; if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father."

Ver. 26. *And he that overcomes and keeps my works to the end, to him will I give power over the heathen.* In regard to the first *and*, which is wanting in some copies, Bengel remarks: "With this little word the present alone begins of all the seven promises; whence we may conclude that this addition has a peculiar connection with the preceding address." To the *and* at the beginning corresponds the expression: and keeps my works to the end, as a resumption of what had been said previously about keeping what they had till the Lord came. The *keeping* forms the contrast to the self-willed or thoughtless forgetting; comp. i. 3. The: to keep the command, the word, or such like, is a form of expression of which John is particularly fond. Bengel: "*My works.* In these I have gone before him with my example, and in doing them he, as my servant, obeys my commands. These works may be learned from the opposite things in ch. xxii. 15. Elsewhere it is said simply, "He that overcomes;" but here there is subjoined, "and keeps my works to the end." So long as a man still lives on the earth, however far he may have attained, he cannot say, I have overcome." For each individual the end is the period of his death, when the Lord comes for him. For the church at large it takes place in the fullest sense at the Lord's advent and appearance for judgment. The end, however, and the Lord's appearance for judgment, often takes place beforehand in a provisional manner, at the close of every dispensation or epoch, such, for example, as the judgment on Jerusalem—comp. Matt. x. 22; and the judgment likewise on heathen Rome bore

a similar character.—The promise given to conquering fidelity, is power over the heathen. By an abuse of 1 Cor. viii. 9, vi. 12, the Gnostics continually had in their mouth the power or dominion over the world, and under the pretence of this they led the Christians, who adhered to them, into the service of corruption (2 Pet. ii. 19), of heathenism. "Only a small pool of water (they said, according to Porphyry in Neander's Church History, ii. p. 665), can be defiled by anything filthy being thrown into it, not the ocean which receives everything, because it knows its own greatness. So, it is only the little man that is overcome by good; but he who is an ocean of power, receives every thing into himself, and is not defiled." "If we (they said, according to the same passage of Porphyry) fly from food, then we are in bondage to the sense of fear; but all must be in subjection to us." "We must," so spake these valiant spirits, according to Clemens of Alexandria, in Neander, p. 664, "through the gratification of lust overcome lust. For, there is nothing great in restraining lust, if one has not tried it; but the greatness lies in not being overcome by lust, when one has experience of it." In opposition to these false and destructive sentiments, the Lord declares that he who stoutly resists them, and abides stedfast by the law, which they mock and nullify, shall come to the possession of a glorious power, to the ascendancy over heathenism and the heathen world. This promise has been gloriously fulfilled. The Christian church, because it conquered and kept, overcame heathenism, while in so far as it imbibed the principles of Gnosticism, and sought power in the way of a false freedom, instead of doing so in the way of obedience, soon disappeared, without leaving a trace of its existence.

Ver. 27. *And he will tend them with a rod of iron, and as a potter's vessels will he dash them in pieces, as I also have received of my Father.* On the tending of the heathen with a rod of iron, comp. on ch. xii. 5, xix. 15.

Ver. 28. *And I will give him the morning-star.* De Wette thinks, it is difficult to say why the promise here should have been made so exceedingly strong, as the victory was still not to be looked upon as one so peculiarly hard and extraordinary. But that the Nicolaitan seduction was exceedingly formidable in Thyatira, follows as a certain consequence from the richness of

the promise, and is confirmed by the length and earnestness with which the heretics are treated of in the preceding context, and also by Jezebel's being named the wife of the angel. That the words, "as I also have received of my Father," must be supplied here too, is evident from ch. xxii. 16, where Christ is designated "the bright morning-star." It is but a slight difference, that there Christ receives the designation on account of his glorious dominion, and here the glorious dominion itself is so designated. That the morning-star is here the image of a glorious dominion, admits of no doubt, as star in the Revelation is constantly employed in the sense of dominion; as the star here occurs in connection with the rod or sceptre, and in the prophecy of Balaam, in Num xxiv. 17, "A star comes out of Jacob, and a sceptre rises out of Israel and shatters," &c., the star likewise denotes dominion over the heathen. So also in the original passage, Isa. xiv 12, the bearer of the world-power, the king of Babylon, on account of his glorious dominion is named the bright morning-star. When the church of Christ remains stedfast, the world must change places with it. With every other explanation of the morning-star, the oneness of the promise is also destroyed. For, the dominion over the heathen is the subject discoursed of in what precedes; and again in ch. xxii. 16, Christ is called the morning-star in connection with other descriptions of his royal supremacy. That he was to be ruler of the heathen was announced at the first by the star of the Magi—as I have shewn in my work on Balaam, p. 177.—It appears that here also allusion is made to the delusive pretensions of the Nicolaitans. These persons promised to their hearers a new light, the dawn (one may just remember J. Böhme's Aurora), or the morning-star of knowledge; and they also called themselves shining stars, destined to dispel the darkness of the Christian church. Instead of this wretched morning-star the true one is promised to the faithful. A similar allusion is made, as appears in the epistle of Jude, in ver. 13 (comp. 2 Pet. ii. 17), where the false teachers are described as "wandering stars," "for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." They called themselves shining stars. But now, since they had the predicate of "wandering" applied to them, the most fearful darkness is announced to them, with a reference to Isa. xiv. 12, 15, precisely as if one should call the

"Friends of light" by the name of "Friends of the *ignis fatuus*."

THE EPISTLE TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN SARDIS.

Ch. iii. 1—6.

The angel at Sardis has a name, that he lives, and is dead. After being solemnly called to repent, the Lord addresses himself to the few living Christians, who still remained there. Those who in such circumstances were sorely tried, are exhorted to be faithful, in consideration of the glorious recompense which awaited them.

Ver. 1. *And to the angel of the church at Sardis write: These things saith he who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.* In regard to the seven Spirits of God, or the powers of the Spirit working in creation, see on ch. i. 4. In the description given of the person of Christ in ch. i., from which usually the predicates in the beginning of the epistles are borrowed, the seven Spirits are not expressly mentioned. But from the feeling, that every thing which is the Father's is also Christ's, with which John shews himself to have been so deeply penetrated in the Apocalypse as well as in the Gospel, there might have been a recurring to ch. i. 4; comp. ch. v. 6. According to the parallel passage, the seven Spirits are not mentioned in respect to the communicating of the spiritual powers of life (Bengel), nor in respect to omniscient and heart-searching knowledge (Vitringa, Züllig, De Wette), but in respect to the unconditional and unlimited power to punish and reward. The predicate: who has the seven Spirits of God, forms the foundation for what is said in ver. 3, "I will come upon you." Just because Christ has the seven Spirits of God, he has also the seven stars. No one can deliver the rulers of the church, imaged by them, out of his hand, if they should fall under his displeasure, as is the case here; nor can any one hurt them, if they are the objects of his love. From the mouth of such an one, the words, "I know thy works," must convey a dreadful sound; for the

roar of words must be followed by the destructive lightning of deeds. The seven stars, which were already mentioned in ch. ii. 1, could only return here in a subordinate relation to the seven Spirits of God; as the possessor of the latter, Christ could only be designated once in the commencement of the epistles. Bengel: "These seven stars have already been repeated from the first chapter in ch. ii. 1; and since nothing else is repeated a second time from the first chapter in the second and third, this is an indication, that the seven stars are here introduced only incidentally, as they are subordinate to the seven Spirits of God."—"The description of this overseer," remarks Bengel, "is short and abrupt, but in a single little word much that is of an unpleasant nature is comprised." The *name* is here, not the accidental proper name, but the significant name of office; as appears alone from the circumstance, that by the angel not a single individual is denoted, but the whole presiding body of the church. Such a body in the church of Christ has by its very position a name that it lives; for Christ has already called them to become alive, and much more is the name of life inseparable from the pastoral office in a Christian church. Yet it is with some probability that Bengel, after the example of Hip. a Lapide, supposes some allusion to be here made to the proper name of the person, who formed the centre of the presiding body at Sardis: "There are in Greek and in other languages also many names, which are derived from life, such as Zosinus, Vitalis, etc. Very likely the angel of this church had a fine name of this sort, and from it the Lord takes occasion to admish him of the opposite nature of his condition." But anyhow this passage is admirably fitted to awaken in us a sacred shudder at what is merely nominal. As Bengel remarks, "In Scripture a name, which is unaccompanied by deed, is often disowned and laid aside, Ruth i. 20, Jer. xx. 3. And it is remarkable, that the Revelation suffers no false names, ch. ii. 2, 9. The Lord everywhere in it looks to the bottom of things, and before his eyes all that is mere appearance, falsehood, and conceit must vanish away."—To be *dead*, says Cocceius justly, is to be devoid of faith and love. For these are the principles and the manifestations of spiritual life. In the symbolical character of the Old Testament, defilement through dead bodies appears as the worst, because death is the wages of sin; whence also it is

the most exact image of the God-deserted state—see my work on Egypt and the Books of Moses, p. 184. On this account our Lord himself speaks in Matth. viii. 22 of the spiritually dead; and his making some alive from the state of death had respect to the same thing. It was an image of what he was going to do on the spiritually dead. Paul especially speaks often of spiritual death, Rom. vi. 13, Eph. ii. 1, 5, 1 Tim. v. 6, Hebr. vi. 1, ix. 14. Spiritual death is to Christ, who is life itself, an object of horror. We must not, however, suppose that it had fully taken possession of the angel at Sardis. In the words "thou art dead," it is only intimated, that death had already got the ascendant of the life. According to the more exact account in ver. 2, the angel and a great part of the church was *near* death—otherwise, the punishment and the admonition to repent would be unsuitable. For, it is impossible that those who have sunk into the condition of spiritual death, after having been alive, can be renewed again to repentance, Hebr. vi. 6. And in that case there should no longer have been any church and any angel at all.

Ver. 2. *Be wakeful, and strengthen the rest that is ready to die; for I have not found thy works complete before my God.* "Death and sleep," remarks Bengel, "are in natural things like one another, and in spiritual they are almost one. It is the commencement of true salvation to a soul when it is awakened from its sleep of death." In Eph. also, v. 14, sleep and death are conjoined with each other. The "be wakeful" here implies more than the "awake" there. It calls them to be awake, and to remain awake. The γρηγορεῖν is not to awake, but to keep awake, to watch, the opposite of a state of sleeping, 1 Thess. v. 10. "Watch, therefore, because ye know not at what hour your Lord comes," the Lord had said to his disciples (Matt. xxiv. 42, xxv. 13.) "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," he had also said to John and the two other disciples who stood nearest to him (Matt. xxvi. 41.) That John here, as Peter in 1 Pet. v. 8, refers to that word, is clear from ver. 3. The *rest*, besides the angel or the overseers, are the members of the church, or the laity, who not less than the overseers were in danger of death. Allusion is made to Ez. xxxiv. 4, "The weak have ye not strengthened, and the sick have ye not healed; the wounded have ye not bound, the wandering have ye not fetched, and the

lost ye have not sought." There, too, it is the rulers of the church who are addressed. Their careless keeping of the Lord's flock is complained of. A testimony is furnished by this also, that the overseers of the church are to be understood by the angel, and that these are to be carefully distinguished from the church itself. Through the special allusion here made to Ezekiel, the whole lamentation raised by him over the bad shepherds is applied to the angel. Intentionally the verb is taken from the *first* member of the representation, primarily applicable to the neglect of the shepherds, and the object from the last.[1] In this manner is the entire representation appropriated. From the original passage also has the neuter been adopted: the rest. There the feminine is used, referring to the sheep. The LXX. also have rendered the feminines by neuters.—*The works*, by which at last every thing is to be determined, Matt. vii. 21, John xiv. 21. The *complete*, full (comp. made full in John xvii. 13, 1 John i. 4, 2 John 12), forms the contrast to the deficiency, under which the works laboured, though more in respect to their soul, the impelling motives, than to their external appearance. The expression: before my God, implies that they were still not justified, however they might appear pure before the eyes of men, and their own slumbering consciences.

Ver. 3. *Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and keep it and repent. If thou wilt not therefore watch, I will come as a thief, and thou wilt not know at what hour I shall come on thee.* Remember *therefore*, since the case is so bad with thee. You must not merely theoretically remember what you have received, but you must lay it to heart, and seriously consider in what opposition your life has stood to the pure doctrine delivered to you, which requires living faith and cordial love. The *how* refers not to the manner of receiving and hearing, but to what has been received and heard; *q.d.* what is the nature or tendency of what ye have received. Of the simple manner of delivery we cannot think with Vitringa, as it is not the delivery, but the receiving and hearing that is spoken of. The passages 1 Tim. vi. 20, 2 Tim. i. 14, Col. ii. 6, "As therefore ye have received the Lord Jesus, so walk in him," refer to the same

1 The ἃ ἔμελλον ἀποθανεῖν does not, as Vitringa supposes, correspond to נהלות but to אבדת.

subject. John appears to have had distinctly in view the passage last quoted. There, as here, it is pressed that the *walk* should be in unison with what had been received from Christ. In regard to the *keeping*, comp. on ii. 26.—The second *therefore* (which is wanting in Luther, while he has *upon thee* too much) joins to the exhortation, Repent: If thou, therefore, since thou so greatly needest repentance or a change of mind. There undoubtedly exists a reference to the declaration of our Lord, Matt. xxiv. 42, 43, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not at what hour your Lord comes; but know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched." How deep an impression this word of our Lord had made upon the minds of his disciples, is manifest from the allusions made to it elsewhere, 2 Pet. iii. 10, 1 Thess. v. 2, 4, where the coming of the day of the Lord as a thief in the night is described as a thing which was already quite well known to the Thessalonians. The passage before us, and that in ch. xvi. 15, so far come nearer to the original one than the others, as in these two the coming of the Lord himself is compared to the coming of a thief, while in the other passages it is to the coming of the day of the Lord.

Ver. 4. *But thou hast a few names in Sardis, who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white garments, for they are worthy.* On the expression, "thou hast," Bengel says, "These, from being so very few, had not withdrawn themselves, otherwise they would not have belonged to the angel of the church. Yet they did not owe it to him, that they had not defiled their garments, but it was a matter of blame to him that there were so few of them." According to the passages, Numb. i. 2, 18, 20, iii. 40, 43, xxvi. 53, Acts i. 15, Rev. xi. 13, it might be thought, that by the names here simply persons were meant. But, 1. This mode of speech is found elsewhere only in numberings and lists, in which persons are taken account of only in respect to their names. 2. It is a natural supposition, that the names here have respect to the declaration: thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead, in ver. 1. It is better, therefore, to suppose, that the few names, which had not defiled their garments, the few in whom the name had its foundation in the reality (for to be a Christian is, at the same time, to keep

one's self unspotted from the world), stand here in reference to the great number of those who might adopt the saying, Nos numerus sumus. Names enough! but only a few among them, of which the bearers did honour to their names; whereas there should have been as many true Christians as there were names in their church. The *defiling* perhaps alludes to the name Sardis: Sardes has become Sordes. "These are they who have not defiled themselves with women," in ch. xiv. 4, corresponds as to the meaning. For there women are figuratively used as a name for sin. Upon the *garments* as a symbol of the state, see on ch. vii. 14, where it is said of true Christians, "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Hence with the early Christians the pure state of the baptized was represented outwardly by the white garments they wore. Because the saints have not defiled their garments, but washed them and made them white, therefore they are to receive white garments for a reward, ch. vi. 11, vii. 9. The appropriation of forgiveness and life in sanctification is followed by blessedness and glory. On the words, "for they are worthy," Bengel remarks, "Oh how much more blessed is this worthiness, than that which is spoken of in ch. xvi. 6!" Comp. 2 Thess. i. 5.—Vitringa is disposed to conclude from this verse, that at Sardis also the heresy of the Nicolaitans had obtained a footing, which is also probable on this account, that they had made such devastations in the neighbouring churches. But neither here, nor at Laodicea, is there the least reference to the Nicolaitans. The reproach of very extensive sinful defilement, which is brought against the church at Sardis, cannot be regarded as such. It is not to be overlooked, that what was sinful in Gnosticism proceeded from the general corruption that pervaded heathen life; and that this could not fail to press into the Christian church under different forms, wherever Gnosticism was in process of formation, and the love of the world or the service of Mammon had obtained a footing. It is very remarkable, that precisely the two churches, which are represented as the most debased, the most complete contrasts to faithful Smyrna and Philadelphia, Sardis and Laodicea, had no Nicolaitans in them. A warning lies concealed here, that amid the dangers arising from speculative errors, we should not overlook those which are still greater. In specu-

lative errors there still is always a spiritual element, however unspiritual or counter-spiritual it may be. The conflict with it quickens, while common worldliness and indifferentism naturally exerts a deadening influence. For the followers of false doctrine itself the *spiritual* excitement not rarely forms a transition to spiritual life.

Ver. 5. *He that overcomes, the same shall be invested with white garments; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life; and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels* The promise here is threefold. The few names that had not defiled their garments in the midst of a merely nominal-Christian society, whose corrupting influence flowed in upon them from every side, needed a particularly strong encouragement. The whole of the three promises run into that of 2 Thess. i. 5, he will be deemed worthy of the kingdom of God, for which he has suffered, or of Acts xiii. 48, he shall be of the number of those who are ordained to eternal life. The second promise rests upon Ps. lxix. 28, "They shall be blotted out of the book of life, and shall not be written with the righteous; on which I remarked in my commentary, "To be blotted out of the book of life, of which mention is made for the first time in Ex. xxxii. 32, is as much as to be devoted to death, with reference to the untimely and sudden death threatened against the wicked in the law. As here, in regard to a temporal existence, so in the New Testament with regard to an eternal one, we read of the book of life, Phil. iv. 3, Rev. xx. 15. To be written with the righteous is a parallel expression. For it is just in the book of life that the righteous are written, they are ordained to life." According to ch. xx. 15, those who are not found written in the book of life shall be thrown into the lake of fire. The *third* promise has the faithfulness of the few chosen ones in confessing the truth for its foundation, whose light shone all the brighter on account of the surrounding unfaithfulness that inseparably attends lukewarmness and worldly-mindedness. It rests especially on Matt. x. 32, 33, "Whosoever confesses me before men, him will I confess before my Father in heaven; but whosoever denies me before men, him will I also deny before my Father in heaven;" and Luke xii. 8, 9, "Whosoever confesses me before men, him will also the Son of man confess before the angels of God. But

whosoever denies me before men, he shall be denied before the angels of God." Matthew mentions only the Father in heaven, Luke only the angels, but here both are found. We shall the less think of ascribing this to accident, if we keep in view the undeniable reference to the words of Christ in ver. 2 and 3. Herder already remarks, "The whole epistle is in the words of Christ, which he spake while yet upon the earth."[1]

Ver. 6. *He that has an ear, to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

THE EPISTLE TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA.

Ch. iii. 7—13.

Justin in his discourse with the Jew Tryphon, § 17, thus reproaches the Jews: "Other nations have not so much guilt in their unrighteous dealings toward us and Christ as you, who are also the authors of the bad prejudice which they raise against the Holy One and us, who are sprung of him." (Comp. § 133 and the first apology, § 31.) From this bitter feeling of hostility on the part of the Jews the feeble community at Philadelphia—feeble in a worldly respect—had much to suffer. But the Lord calls out to them: Faint not thou little weakling, and lays open to her the wellspring of rich consolation. No Jew shall be able to rob you of the kingdom of God, ye to whom it belongs, ver. 8. On the contrary, many of that nation, who now in proud infatuation give themselves out for the only true people of God, shall one day humbly sue for reception into the calumniated church of Christ, as the only church of God and the one region of safety, ver. 9. Your stedfastness in persecutions from the world secures your preservation in the judgment, which is soon to take place, ver. 10, 11. And at the end of your course eternal blessedness shall

1 There is an allusion also to the same declaration of Christ in John xii. 42, bearing respect to the failure of its object; so also, perhaps, in John i. 20, where there is the same contrast between confessing and not denying. The ὁμολογεῖν is here used with the accusative of that, to which one confesses, as in John ix. 22; Matt. and Luke have ἐν.

burst upon your view, ver. 12 Whoever has an ear for such glorious promises, he will not faint, but fight with vigour, ver. 13.

Ver. 7. *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things saith the Holy, the True, he that has the key of David, who opens and no one shuts, who shuts and no one opens.* Absolute holiness is an unconditional and exclusive predicate of God; comp. on the divine holiness, the absolute exaltation of God above all created beings, on ch. iv. 8. The angels are holy, raised above the world, above the earth, the state of vanity, but the name of the Holy belongs only to one. The Holy—by this word the Lord is exalted above all the calumnies and blasphemies of the Jews, who in the Lord of glory saw only the crucified. (Tryphon in Justin, § 32, says: "This Christ of yours was without honour and glory so that he fell under the severest curse of the law of God, for he was crucified"). And so it places his church upon an immoveable rock, on which the billows of the world must break in pieces. He that has the Holy for his friend, for him the hostile Jews are no more than puny dwarfs. The True is also an exclusively divine predicate. It is a word much liked by John, and more frequently used by him than by other writers of the New Testament; for in a world of shew and appearance, he ever longed after the true Being. To limit it here to mere truthfulness in promising would be quite arbitrary; as there is nothing in the context pointing to that, and the connection with holiness is against it. For truthfulness in promising is not properly fitted to stand as a contrast to the assaults of the Jews, to which every thing here has respect. These were directed to the object of shewing, not only that there was a disagreement in Christ between word and deed, but also a contrariety between appearance and essence, between faith and reality. Trypho reproaches Christians with being deceived by lying speeches, and following worthless men. "You have," says he, "lent your faith to idle reports, and imagine to yourselves a Christ, for love to whom ye foolishly perish." It is not a simple opposition to a Pseudo-Messias that we ought to find here. For the subject of discourse is not concerning a true Christ, but concerning the *true* in the fullest sense. In 1 John v. 20 this is simply identified with the true God: Christ is there first named the true, and then imme-

diately afterwards is designated the true God and eternal life. In this book itself, ch. vi. 10, the predicates of the Holy and the True are attributed to the supreme God. The absolutely true being is only the divine, all other being is overlaid with the seeming and the untrue. On account merely of his essential oneness with the Father, could Christ call himself the Truth in John xiv. 6, and be designated here and in 1 John v. 20 as the True. When the church directs her eye upon the True, she can look down with a holy irony upon the blasphemies of the Jews, and is filled with a holy boldness. For, if her Saviour is the True, he is also the Omnipotent; feebleness exists only where there is untruthfulness, false appearance, lies; and from unconditional Truth of Being truthfulness of word is also inseparable.—Justin in his discourse with Tryphon, § 123, reproaches the Jews with deceiving themselves, as if they alone were Israel, and cursing the blessed people of God. They felt that to allow the claim of Christians, was to overthrow their own claim to be the children of God. These Jewish pretensions pass for nothing with us. The death, which has reigned for eighteen centuries in the Synagogue, and the life that has belonged to the church, render them of no avail with us. We laugh at them. But it was otherwise at the close of the first century. Then the minds of Christians had to give earnest heed, lest they should be imposed upon by such pretensions. They had a plausible appearance about them. But by the words, "Who has the key of David," etc., they are annihilated as by a single stroke. If the Jews have in their scale the external succession, the uninterrupted chain of outward church fellowship, Christ is in the scale of the Christians, and secures that the other shall kick the beam. It is as much as to say, Be not at all concerned, that the Jews boast of possessing the key of the kingdom of heaven. Look to the person who really possesses it, Christ, and rejoice and be glad, if he but opens the gate for you. The key of David is the key, by which he opens his house—comp. Isa. xxii. 22, "And I give the key of the house of David upon his shoulder, and he opens and no one shuts, and he shuts and no one opens." Allusion is made here to that passage. Still the reference must not be pressed too closely. Remarks such as this, "who, like Eliakim in Isa. xxii. 22, is the chief steward over the kingdom of God," tread far too

closely on the dignity of Christ, and John himself would have shuddered at them. Christ does not stand for Eliakim, but those are in a similar position to his, whom Christ has entrusted with the key of government—comp. Matt. xvi. 19. This itself meets the misunderstanding, that here the subject discoursed of is not, as in Isaiah, the key of the house of David, but, with a manifestly intentional deviation, the key of David, who is perpetuated in Christ, for his house. On the King's castle on Zion (comp. 2 Sam. v. 9), in Neh. iii. 25, called the upper house of the king, in Jer. xxxii. 2, the house of the king of Judah, in Ps. ci. 2, 7, the house of David, see the Christology III., p. 273. The tower of this royal castle, called in the Song iv. 4, David's tower, Micah considers in ch. iv. 8, as the symbol of the dominion of David's race. In this house of David dwelt all his servants along with him, whether or not they might have there a proper habitation, just as in the house of the Lord all his servants spiritually dwell with him. In Ps. ci., which was sung by David from the soul of his whole race, it is said, "Mine eyes look after the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he that walks in a blameless way, he shall serve me. He that uses deceit shall not dwell in my house, he that speaks lies shall not serve me." So that the house of David is the symbol of the kingdom of David, and the kingdom of Christ is continually regarded in Scripture as the continuation and completion of this—see in reference to the culminating of the Davidic stem in Christ, my Commentary on the Psalms, vol. iii. p. 79, *Trans.*; Luke i. 32. Christ the root and the offspring of David (comp. v. 5, xxii. 16), has as such the key of David. The house or kingdom of David is in meaning identical with the kingdom of God. For, David was set by God as king over his whole people and for all times; and since 2 Sam. vii. it has become impossible to serve God aright without at the sametime serving David. So that the key of David is all one with the key of the kingdom of heaven in Matth. xvi. 19. There is an undoubted connection between this passage and ch. i. 18, where Christ is described as having the key of death and of hell; and it must be regarded as a touchstone for the correct explanation of the words before us, if it accords with this connection. For, the predicates of Christ in the introduction of the epistles are, according to the rule, derived from the description in ch. i. A reference to that

part of the description must the rather be supposed here, as it forms the close of the description of Christ, while here also the allusion to the description is brought to an end with this predicate; and that part of the description itself, as well as this verse, rests upon Isa. xxii. 22. According to this view, then, the desired connection comes immediately out. The key of David corresponds to the key of death and of hell. To whomsoever he opens with the key of David, for him he shuts death and hell; for, he that is in David's house, or in the kingdom of God, is secure against death and hell; but if Christ shuts for any one with the key of David, he opens for him death and hell. According to Bengel, the *opening* indicates the call to do good works, the *shutting* the putting away of all that is contrary. But it admits of no doubt, that the opening refers to the reception of the persons, and the shutting to their exclusion. For in ch. i. 18 the key opens and shuts for persons, as also in Matth. xvi. 19, where the holder of the key retains and forgives sins, and so exercises an administrative power in regard to membership in God's kingdom—comp. John xx. 23. In Isaiah xxii. 22, Eliakim also receives the key of the house of David, so that it belongs to him to determine, who was to be admitted into the house, or excluded from it.

Ver. 8. *I know thy works. Behold I have given before thee an open door, and no one can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.* Here also we have three points of commendation: the works, the keeping of Christ's word with a little strength, and the not denying of his name. But the specializing of the works is entwined with a declaration going before, which establishes the connection with the predicates that were attributed to Christ in ver. 7. We are not to inclose that declaration in brackets, although certainly as to the meaning the works are more nearly described in the words: thou hast a little strength, &c. If it is certain, that the opening and shutting in ver. 7 refers to personal membership in the kingdom of God, then the opened door, which no one can shut, which serves to the Philadelphians themselves for an entrance into the kingdom of God, is spoken of in the same respect, and as a ground of consolation to them before the Jews, who would deny them any share in the kingdom of God; the Lord

himself had received them into his kingdom, and no Jew could prevail to exclude them from it. By the open door is usually understood "a free scope for proclaiming the gospel, or for active exertions to bring men to the faith," with reference to 1 Cor. xvi. 9, 2 Cor. ii. 12, where the opened door is the door of active operations. But here the door is more exactly determined by the connection with ver. 7 as an entrance into the house of David or the kingdom of God. Then, the view in question is opposed by, "I have given," in contradistinction to, "I give," in ver. 9. A space for active labour had still not been given to the angel at Philadelphia; otherwise his strength would not have been small. But the preterite does not suit with a prophetical view of the words. On the contrary argues the progression from the preterite to the future through the present, accompanied by the thrice-repeated *Behold.* By the *little strength* is meant not small official grace, but, as appears from ii. 9, the weak beginnings and depressed circumstances of the church, which made it easy to match them on account of the wealth of their Jewish adversaries.

Ver. 9. *Behold, I give out of Satan's school of those that say, they are Jews and are not, but lie. Behold I will make them, that they shall come and supplicate before thy feet, and know that I have loved thee.* To that which God has already given, and which no one can cause to return again, there is here subjoined what he *gives:* to the proper participation of Christians in the kingdom of God, a humble and express recognition of the church of Christ, as the true and only church of the Lord, on the part of those who proudly raised themselves above it, and denied it any part in the Lord. From this respect in the "I give," to the "I have given," it is clear that here also the discourse is of a *gift* of the Lord: Behold I give (to thee; or to the Christian church, and so to thee also) some of Satan's school,[1] &c.; that the giving does not stand in the sense of *making*, so that "I will make," might be considered as a resumption of the "I give." The kind of giving is certainly determined more accurately by what follows. It is clear from this, that they were in so far to be given to the church as their hostility was to be changed into re-

1 See, in reference to the common omission of the *some* before the מִן in Heb., Gesenius's Thes., p. 800.

verential love. It is carefully to be observed, that it is not said: I give the synagogue of Satan, but that it is only members of this that are spoken of—those in it who should give to the Lord a seeing eye and a hearing ear, recognising the vanity of their own pretensions and the worth of that salvation which was presented to them in the church. This serves as a limitation of what Paul says regarding the conversion of "all Israel," Rom. xi. 26; shews that thereby the remaining of a sediment behind, the continuance of a synagogue of Satan even to the last, is not excluded. Nor indeed could it be otherwise, unless one were to give up human freedom, and fall into the unscriptural doctrine of the restoration.—Just as the present: I give, connecting itself with the time then being, refers to a purpose presently fulfilled, so: I will make, points to the execution as what was to take place in the future. That we are not to overlook the distinction of the three tenses, is obvious from the corresponding thrice *Behold.* This second half of the verse rests upon Isa. lx. 14, "And there come bending to thee the sons of thy oppressors, and all thy despisers throw themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they call thee the city of the Lord, Zion of the holy Israel." The reason of such lowly prostration *there,* and hence also here, may be learned, not only from the name by which they called her, but also from ch. xlv. 14, "And they shall throw themselves down before thee, shall supplicate to thee: only in thee is God, and there is no God besides." They prostrate themselves before the church, because they acknowledge that the Lord is in the midst of her, that in her is the only source of salvation, and in connection with her the only true blessing. We are led here also to the same result by the words, "and know that I have loved thee," and hence that only in fellowship with thee there is salvation for those who now think thee excluded from the kingdom of God. The Jews were wont to refer those old promises to the synagogue; but a good part of them, as many as were ordained to salvation, would acknowledge that they belonged to the church. They shall therefore renounce the claim of homage from others, and come themselves willingly and cheerfully to do homage. But why should we be troubled at the scornful pride of those of whom we know that they are soon to be found lying at our feet?—We must not complain, that in regard to the fulfilment of the prophecy we

are left without the light of history. As most of the blessings of Jacob in Gen. xlix. and of Moses in Deut. xxxiii., which have respect to the particular tribes only in so far as they were part of the whole people, so what is written here is only an application of what belongs to the whole Christian church, to a particular section of it. The fulfilment would have taken place, even if in Philadelphia itself there had been no remarkable transition from Judaism to Christianity. What belongs to the whole is shared in also by the part. That the church of Christ is the true church of the Lord, has been proved to be the case by the attractive power she has exerted over the members of the synagogue, while Judaism has lost all attractive influence since the period of Christ's appearance. We are to regard the thought, As surely as I am the holy, I am also the true, as pervading the whole verse. On this solid foundation the promise is raised.

Ver. 10. *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to tempt those that dwell upon the earth.* Bengel: "This is spoken to the heart! So can the Lord Jesus single out his own. When it goes hardest with the world, it shall be the best with them. Noah in his ark was borne softly through the waters, when all the world besides were engulphed around and beneath him." The *word of Christ's patience*, according to the common view, must be the whole range of Christian doctrine. So De Wette, "The word, which partly from its subject and spirit, and partly on account of the duty of confessing and obeying it, demands stedfastness such as is peculiar to me and my people." But the unnaturalness of this exposition is written on its very front. The word, which among many other things requires also patience, cannot be simply described as the word of patience. Far more natural is the explanation, which refers it to certain declarations of Christ, which enjoin patience and stedfastness. This is the rather to be adopted, as in other parts also of these epistles references occur to particular words of Christ contained in the Gospels, and which is the more natural, as it is Christ here also who himself speaks. For this explanation there are special reasons. As, first, that patience is frequently enjoined in the discourses of Christ, and is strongly inculcated, Luke xxi. 19, viii. 15, and especially the kernel-declaration, "He that continues

(has patience) to the end, shall be saved," Matt. x. 22, xxiv. 13. Then, again, both here, and in those original passages, patience is described as a preservative against participation in the judgments that threaten the world. He that remains stedfast in his internal separation from the world, and makes no concessions to it, he shall also be separated from it externally, he shall not suffer with it. *My* patience, that of Christ—comp. "the patience of Jesus Christ" in ch. i. 9.[1] In the passages alluded to the subject discoursed of is specifically Christian patience. In Luke xxi. 19, for example, the patience meant is stedfastness in bearing hatred and persecution for the name of Christ. This is what shall secure deliverance from the judgments which shall come upon an ungodly world. In the *keeping* or preserving the idea of deliverance is included. And from this is explained the: I will keep thee (exempting or delivering thee) out of, etc.[2] What is more exactly intended by the keeping is to be understood from ver. 7. According to the fuller explication there given it is of a double sort—consisting in the protection which the Lord causes to be extended to his faithful people amid the plagues that fall upon the earth, after the example of the preservation given to Israel amid the plagues that desolated Egypt; and in the enjoyment of the future inheritance of glory. Scripture usually speaks of *temptations* only in respect to believers, because only in their case can there be found a proper proving, so that the matter may turn out either one way or another; whereas in respect to the world, which has but one impelling principle, the result is certain from the first. Yet the idea of temptation is not on this account to be understood as having no reference whatever to the world. For it is of importance that even what may be understood of itself should be brought clearly to view, because so many are disposed to deceive themselves in regard to it, and suppose that still some other result may be attained than what is grounded in the nature of things. In Deut. iv. 34 the Egyptian plagues are des-

1 The μου here serves to confirm the reading there Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, and shows the ἐν Ἰησοῦ to be a gloss.

2 The τηρεῖν with ἐκ only here and John xvii. 15, where, on account of the preceding ἐκ, we can hardly translate the ἐκ by *from*. An explanation is given by John xii. 27: Πάτερ, σῶσόν με ἐκ τῆς ὥρας ταύτης. The τηρεῖν is used in the Gospel of John at once of the conservative activity of believers, and of what corresponds thereto, the conservative activity of God and Christ.

cribed as temptations. So also in ch. vii. 19, xxix. 3. (Michaelis: Deus enim experiri voluit plagis suis, vellentne persistere in impietate necne.) The result of this trial stands written in ch. ix. 20, xvi. 11—21; they did not repent of their deeds, they blasphemed God on account of the plagues, etc. While with believers the proving renders manifest their faith and love, it only serves with worldly people to bring to light their impenitence and hardness of heart, and the whole abyss of their perdition becomes naked and open to view. The "whole world," and "the inhabitants of the earth," do not of themselves indicate the non-Christian part of its people, but only in the present connection, since the Christians are to be kept out of the temptation. For we have not here a separate promise for Philadelphia, but, as is shown by ch. vii., and also by ver. 9, only an individual application of what is of force throughout the whole Christian church; rendered prominent here, because the church of Philadelphia had to suffer very much for the sake of Christ, and stood especially in need of consolation. Christ sets before his people the alternative, either to suffer from the world, or to suffer with the world. Whosoever would have himself exempted from the one, he must certainly fall under the other. But he that willingly and cheerfully undergoes the former, has a refuge from the latter. The heart and centre of the whole world at that time was formed of the Roman empire, of which we must mainly (though not at all exclusively) think, on this account alone, because from it primarily proceeded the transgression, which had to be visited by the temptation; and also because it was there the Christian church, which was to be delivered from the temptation, had its seat.—Some expositors entirely fail, under the temptation, to think of a Christian persecution.

Ver. 11. *Behold I come quickly. Hold what thou hast, that no one take thy crown.* Bengel: "For this overseer a crown was prepared and exhibited, as if it was said: This crown belongs to N., the angel of the church at Philadelphia, and if he but perseveres, no one can take it from him. If we only are careful in respect to that which God has intrusted to us, we need not be solicitous about that which remains for us with him. Whoever has anything let him think on this word, Hold what thou hast." The Lord comes primarily in the judgments that are executed on

this world, which in ver. 10 were announced in the plan (it is from its connection with ver. 10 that the "I come quickly" here receives its more precise determination), and more at large in the vision of the seven seals—comp. ch. vi. 2. The word: I come quickly, is applicable to all times. Where sin is, and hostility toward the church of the Lord, there also the Lord is near. On the expression, "Hold what thou hast," comp. ch. ii. 25, "Hold what ye have, till I come."—The *crown* is the crown of life in ch. ii. 10, the eternal blessedness, which the chosen already possess in faith, and which God faithfully keeps for them, that he may bring it forth to them in his time. This crown is not actually bestowed on them before the coming of the Lord, but it may before that period at any time be lost. Jews and heathen may rob us of it, if we are not on our guard. But, oh! who would be afraid of these, and out of regard to them deny his faith, when he knows how soon their day is coming! The more difficult they make it for us, the nearer the day is, and the more foolish would it be to yield to them, in order first to be judged with them, and then to be despoiled of our crown. The mention of the crown naturally leads to the concluding promise.

Ver. 12. *He that overcomes, him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall not go out any more. And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the New Jerusalem, the city of my God, that comes down from heaven from my God, and my name the new.* On the temple as a figurative designation of the church, comp. in ch. xi. 1. Here the temple can only be the church triumphant. For, the concluding promises to the churches refer always to that future existence, and here in the second promise it is the New Jerusalem that is discoursed of, in contrast to the Old Jerusalem, the militant church. That we are not to think alone of the regeneration, Matth. xix. 28, the church on the glorified earth, that it rather points to the state of final blessedness in heaven, appears from ch. vii. 15. This alone might be understood, with Bengel, according to ch. xxi. 22. However, it is more simple to say, that the discourse there is of a common material temple, and only *this* is denied to have a place in the new Jerusalem. For the temple here is manifestly contemplated as one perpetually abiding, and must consequently denote the triumphant Christian

church in its two states of existence, which in the Apocalypse are constantly represented as an internally united whole. That by the *pillar* only one thing is brought into view, the unchangeable stability, is made perfectly plain by the explanatory clause, which excludes all doubt, "and shall no more go out." Those who have sought to find more in the image, have not considered, that it is spoken not of some peculiarly distinguished Christians, but of Christians generally (for to be a conqueror and to be a Christian is the same thing); also, that in the second promise a simple participation in the kingdom of glory is what is certified; and that the concluding promises generally unfold only what is common to all Christians, eternal blessedness. Substantially what is said in John viii. 35, coincides with the promise before us, "The servant does not remain in the house for ever (the spiritual house, the church), the Son remains for ever." The expression, "my God," occurs in the verse four times, no doubt intentionally—perhaps, with a respect to the four letters in the name Jehovah, which must now be disclosed in its whole depth to the elect.—*Upon him*, upon the conqueror, not upon the pillar. For the latter was no longer the subject of discourse in the immediately preceding context; the not going out, only suits the conqueror, not at all the pillar; and in ch. xiv. 1 the chosen have the name of Christ and the name of the Father written on their foreheads. That the chosen are distinguished by the name of the Father, points to this, that the most high God is over them, that they dwell as his dear property, ch. vii. 15. That they bear the name of the New Jerusalem (comp. on ch. xxi. 2), characterizes them as its citizens. That Christ's new name is also written on them, which, according to ch. xix. 16, runs, "King of kings and Lord of lords," imports that they must be received into fellowship with the new state, which is marked by the new name, that they shall "reign with him for ever," xxii. 5.

Ver. 13. *He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

THE EPISTLE TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA.

Ch. iii. 14—22.

The angel of the church at Laodicea, and this church itself, for which Paul had fought a great fight (Col. ii. 1, iv. 15, ss.), had become lukewarm, blind and naked. In their own imagination they were the foremost, but in reality they were the farthest from salvation. Instead of what they vainly conceived themselves to be, there must be repentance. Thus alone can they find life and full satisfaction here by intimate fellowship with Christ, and hereafter participate in the glory, which awaits the true confessor. Would they but have a hearing hear for the great secrets, which only God's Spirit can disclose, and out of regard to these suffer themselves to be drawn to repentance!

Ver. 14. *And to the angel of the church at Laodicea write: These things says Amen, the true and faithful witness, the beginning of the creation of God.* The Hebrew Amen is every where used adverbially, even in Isa. lxv. 16, where the God of the Verily is the God whose words and deeds have always the *verily* impressed on them. So it is also here. The verily is he, who in all he says, in disclosing the concealed depths of the heart, in threatening and promising, can always add with the fullest right the *verily;* while in regard to every thing that a short-sighted man speaks, there constantly goes along with it a mark of interrogation, and the more so indeed the more confidently he speaks. This note of distinction comes out in connection with the *verily* so frequently occurring in the discourses of our Lord, and occurring more frequently in the Gospel of John than the others. In this Gospel also it is often reduplicated.[1] For, this, just as the predicate here, points to the fulness of truth that dwells in him as the True—comp. on iii. 7.—Christ was already in the Introduction designated the *true witness*, ch. i. 5. There, for the consolation (as appears from the connection) of those who were ready to despair in the presence of a seemingly almighty

1 Lampe on John i. 52 throws out the question, qui factum sit, ut reliqui Evangelistae constanter Jesum introducant semel tantum Amen pronunciantem, Joannes vero aeque constanter commemoret, quod eam ingeminaverit.

world, the eye of faith is pointed to the certainty of his promises. Here, according to what follows, we have mainly to think of the certainty of his threatening and rebuking testimony: Think not that ye have to do with a short-sighted man, who may easily be deceived, who may judge falsely of your spiritual condition, and dream of imaginary dangers; in the presence of the true and faithful witness repent, so that ye may not be consumed by his coming wrath. Still, we are not to think alone of threatening and rebuke. For, the promise also in ver. 20 and 21 has the predicates of Christ here as its foundation. The condemnatory judgment of the true and faithful witness must no one gainsay, however deep it may wound, his threatening must no one despise, his promise must all confide in.—When it is said of God and Christ that he is the beginning (comp. on ch. i. 8), it is the *living* beginning that is meant—that wherein the beginning has its root, the source of being; as also God and Christ are named the end, from the end being ruled by them, or having its root in them. Now, the same that is the beginning alone, is the beginning of the creation of God. For, it is in relation to the creatures that God and Christ are named the beginning. As the beginning of these creatures of God, as the one in whom we all live and move and have our being, Christ is omniscient in the knowledge of the works ("there is no creature that is not manifest before him; all is naked and open to his eyes," Heb. iv. 13), almighty in his power to punish and reward them.—In the fact also of God's being called the beginning, is the inadmissibility discovered of the Arian exposition, according to which Christ is here called the beginning of the creation, as himself the first creature. It would, besides, be quite extraordinary if He, who everywhere goes forth for the purpose of exhibiting the most perfect unity of being between the Father and the Son, should here for once fix a terrible gulph betwixt them. Here too, in particular, where it was of importance to set Christ as high as possible, in order to secure attention to the address that follows by pointing to his omniscience and his almightiness! Against the Arian exposition also decides the original passage, Col. i. 15—18, comp. on ch. i. 5. That there Christ is spoken of as the author of creation, not as the first of created beings, has been shewn recently by Huther. And as the author of creation Christ also appears else-

where in this book; comp. on ch. v. 13.—Perhaps in this predicate of Christ: the *arche* of the *ktisis* of God there is an allusion to the name of Archippus, who in Col. iv. 17 (comp. Philem. ver. 2) appears as the most influential overseer in Laodicea: "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the office, which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it."[1] And in the Apostolical Constitutions VIII. 46 he is called the first bishop of the Laodiceans, and is said to have been ordained by the apostles. The admonition sent to him by Paul already sounds somewhat suspicious.

Ver. 15. *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would that thou wert cold or hot!* Coldness here is the love produced by self, heat that which is kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit—comp. Luke xii. 49, Acts ii. 2—4, Rom. v. 5. The latter is called in the Song the flame of the Lord, viii. 6, "Its glow is fiery and a flame of the Lord, so that even many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it." It may seem extraordinary that the coldness is here placed higher than what stands mid-way between it and the being hot, lukewarmness. According to the common threefold division of the praise and blame, the not being cold appears also as a reproach. And what is still more, it is the wish that the angel at Laodicea would be either cold or hot, which is expressed. With the common remarks, "thou shouldst then be more easily brought right," or that the "I would" should not be taken too stringently, etc., we plainly cannot be satisfied. One always conceives a considerable amount of one-sidedness to cleave to the matter when so represented. Out of the coldness, apart from fellowship with Christ, one may, on applying himself generally to Christ, become a lukewarm person. The lukewarm in the church of the Old Testament were the Pharisees. But the Lord could never have given utterance to the wish that the Pharisees would become Sadducees. There is only *one* solution of the difficulty. *The Lord speaks here only of the condition of those who stand in a relation to himself.* In regard to others the word in 1 Cor. v. 12 holds good. So that we

1 Whether Archippus was at Colosse, or at Laodicea, certainly cannot with absolute certainty be determined from the passage referred to. But the latter is favoured by the Say; which seems to presuppose that Archippus did not belong to the persons to whom the epistle was immediately addressed. From Philem. ver. 2, comp. with Col. iv. 9, it could only be concluded that Archippus dwelt at Colosse, if there did not exist a close connection between the churches.

can only think of being cold in such a manner, as has connected with it the painful consciousness that one *is* cold, a hearty desire to become hot. To the saying : Blessed are they who are poor in spirit, this ; Blessed are they who in their own feeling are cold in spirit, goes hand in hand. In order to become warm, one must first have been cold ; and even if one has become warm, the being cold still does not lose its signification ; every advance is conditioned by the being cold, and proceeds in exact proportion to it. In a manner similar to the being cold here, the being blind occurs in John ix. 41, " Were ye blind (*q.d.* did ye but feel yourselves blind) ye should have no sin ; but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remains." Accordingly, the being cold is an absolutely preferable state to the being lukewarm. The latter is also not to be tolerated as a transition-state. It does not, like the being cold, lie on the path of a healthful development, but is degeneracy, sickness, in many cases a sickness to death. Where the work of salvation proceeds, there a direct transition to warmth is never experienced, but the first stage is always that of coldness. Would that thou wert cold, the Lord is also saying to our Laodicean age! Were it but come to that, the warmth would soon appear of itself.

Ver. 16. *But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.* Lukewarm water provokes to spuing. There is nothing more common than for lukewarmness to be cast as a reproach against others by those who are lukewarm in the truth themselves. How many of the orthodox in the seventeenth century acted so! But it not rarely happens with anxious minds, that they regard themselves as lukewarm without actually being so. " One must not always," Bengel remarks, " estimate what they have of the heat of life by their own feelings. A person in a state of bodily health may have a lively heat or warmth in his body, and be himself unconscious of it, while another, who takes him by the hand, readily perceives it. So in spiritual things one, who is accustomed to spiritual ardour, may be without much sensibility, such as may appear somewhat strange and wonderful to another of little experience in the divine life. It belongs also to the fundamental constitution of the soul, that when it burns with a fervent zeal for God, the fire within shall never say : It is enough."

Ver. 17. *Because thou sayest, I am rich and have enriched myself and need nothing; and knowest not, that thou art wretched and miserable, poor, blind, and naked.* The accusation of lukewarmness has its ground here. We are not to take this verse as a premiss, and ver. 18 as a conclusion: Because thou sayest, etc., therefore I advise thee. For so long a premiss does not suit the excited character, which belongs to the discourse here. And the kind of periodical diction in question is ill-suited in general to the Hebraistic style of the Apocalypse. A view is given here of lukewarmness, which is full of consolation for humble and vexed souls. The severe judgment of the Lord against it has not respect to wants and weaknesses in themselves, toward which the Lord manifests infinite compassion; it has respect to them only in connection with a high-minded conceit, a state of self-satisfaction, the want of any sensible convictions of sin, or of earnest desires after pardon and sanctification. The palpable contrast between imaginary riches and actual poverty requires, that the riches should lie on the same territory that the poverty does, that it must be *spiritual* riches which are meant—comp. 1 Cor. i. 5, iv. 8, 2 Cor. viii. 9. The comparison of the original passage, Hos. xii. 8, "Ephraim says, I have become rich, and have found substance," shews, that there is no substantial difference between the two expressions. "I have become rich" and "I have enriched myself." Only by varying the words the idea of great wealth is expressed. It is possible, that the Laodiceans had low ideas of the calling of Christians, and so regarded the most miserable attainments as splendid riches. But it is also possible (and this is much more probable from the existing position of the Christian church), that they could point to showy virtues. How one can have and do everything, and still be lukewarm, appears from the example of the Pharisees, to whose "I thank thee, etc.," the Laodiceans responded, and received also along with them the condemnation of heaven, "Ye are they who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your heart;" see also 1 Cor. xiii. 1, ss. The three actual wants correspond to the three imaginary distinctions. But beforehand the whole condition of the Laodiceans is condensed into the, *par excellence*, "wretched and miserable." The reproach of blindness, comp. Matth. xv. 14, xxiii. 26, shews, that the Laodiceans were dis-

posed to pride themselves also on their knowledge. But while they undertook to search the depths of Godhead, and dreamt of the treasures of knowledge, as it appears also from the epistle to the Colossians, that a tendency existed at a very early period among the Christians in that region to pretend to a higher knowledge, they could not see what lay immediately before their eyes, did not at all know themselves, imagined themselves to be superlatively rich, though they actually were in a state of beggary.

Ver. 18. *I counsel thee, to buy of me gold, that has been purified in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white clothing, that thou mayest put on, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear; and eye-salve, to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see.* The *buying* is from Isa. lv. 1. The merchandise consists in giving up the imagination of their own excellence, of the already accomplished aim, which had not attained to a knowledge of the coldness, and therefore could not come to a possession of the warmth, in having a heartfelt desire, zealous endeavours, fighting and striving, and all with the conviction, that in one's own strength nothing is done. The gold, which is purified with fire, signifies tried faith. This is also in 1 Pet. i. 7 compared with gold, that has been purified in the fire; and the former explanation is to be obtained by viewing it in connection with that passage—comp. also Jas. i. 3, where likewise faith appears as an object for trial and purification. We are not to think of the riches, which may be found in the service of the Redeemer, nor generally upon any objective spiritual good; for that the discourse is of a subjective property is plain from the expression: purified in the fire. It was in faith, too, that the Laodiceans placed the chief part of their imaginary wealth. But their faith was not of such a kind, as that it could go through a period of trial. It was rather a faith of the fancy than a heart-faith. The *white garments* are the Christian virtues, which can only be found in fellowship with Christ—comp on iii. 4. The third thing is true spiritual knowledge, as contrasted with a superficial show-knowledge. The *eye-salve* is the illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit.

Ver. 19. *Whomsoever I love, them I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.* In these words, says Bengel, "the penetrating force of the preceding address is represented,

yet not quite immediately, only after it had wrought its necessary effect." The contrast between the former and the present times is shown by the remark of De Wette, "The blame and the threatening are not meant in so bad a sense, as is evident from the loving affectionate exhortation;" whereas the older expositors point with one consent to the greatness of the long-suffering and goodness of God and Christ that here displays itself toward sinners. They speak of these being manifested now under the New Testament, just as formerly they had waited in the days of Noah (1 Pet. iii. 20), if by any means a better feeling might be awakened in the minds of sinners; while still they unfold the truth that it is just love, which holds out in prospect a terrible condemnation for those who will not be brought to repentance through the reformatory discipline. It may certainly be gathered from the "whom I love," that Laodicea had still not reached the last step.[1] But this indeed is presupposed by the fact, that its candlestick had not yet been removed from its place. Allusion is made to Prov. iii. 11, 12, "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, and be not impatient of his correction; for whom the Lord loves he corrects, and as a father the son, in whom he delights." This passage is also quoted in Heb. xii. 5, 6. We can the less regard the coincidence with it here as accidental, as in what immediately follows there is also a reference to the writings of Solomon. The words: Be zealous and repent, are not placed in a sort of reverse order. For repentance is not a mere insight into one's poverty and nakedness, but a change of mind, a transition from lukewarmness through coldness to the fervent zeal of love. The call to repent, added to the exhortation to be zealous, implies that Laodicea could attain to true zeal only by undergoing an entire change of mind.

Ver. 20. *Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any one hear my voice and open the door, I will go into him, and sup with him, and he with me.* The first part of the verse alludes to the Song v. 2, "I sleep, but my heart wakes. There is the voice of my beloved who knocks: Open to me my beloved, my sister, my dove, my undefiled." The reference does not lie merely in the particular words. The spiritual state of the person

[1] Vitringa: "That church was therefore still in some respect loved by the Lord. He desired to preserve it as loved, not to destroy it as reprobate," etc.

addressed is the same in both passages. The bride is between sleeping and waking, incertum vigilans (comp. iii. 2), corresponding to the state of lukewarmness here: she cannot at first overcome her slumbering inactivity, and delays to let the bridegroom in. This mere allusion to the commencement calls up before the trembling soul all that follows; how repentance seizes her, and she would then open to the bridegroom, while he meanwhile has gone away: "I sought him but I found him not, I called, but he answered not;" how she hied after him, and was beaten by the watchmen. The grief of a soul, that has driven the Lord from it, could not be more graphically exhibited than it is there. The second member of the verse, as well as the first, points to the Song. There the supper is spoken of which the Lord will hold with the soul and it with him. Immediately before the passage of Canticles just referred to, in ch. iv. 17, the bride speaks to the bridegroom, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits;" and the bridegroom says in ch. v. 1, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I break my myrrh together with roots; I eat my honey with my comb; I drink my wine with my milk." This is the foundation for the saying here, "I will sup with him." In the Song, ch. ii. 3, the bride says, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sit under his shadow, which I desired, and his fruit is sweet to my taste." This is the foundation for the other clause, "and he with me." In what the supper consists, which the bride prepares for the bridegroom, and he again for her, is rendered plain by the Epiphonem of the sacred bard, with which the whole piece concludes, that ch. iv. 17 belongs to, and after which we find the commencement of a new part at ch. v. 2, presenting Sulamith to our view in another and less joyful situation: "Eat, O friends, and drink, and be drunk *of love*." It is love, to the enjoyment of which the bride invites the bridegroom, and which she enjoys again of him. We have substantially the same thing as this mutual supping between Christ and the believer in John xiv. 21, "He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him." This passage and that of ver. 23, "He that loveth me, will keep my works, and my Father will love him, and *we will come to him*, and make our abode with him," stand in the closest relation

to the one before us, though of such a kind, that we cannot think of imitation. They, too, in their tender sympathy, in their sweet and affectionate tone, point back to the Song. Aversion to that portion of Scripture, however, has led some to deny that there is here any reference to it. The objection is urged, that no references are anywhere else to be found in the New Testament to Canticles. But it is enough to point in reply to John vii. 38, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture says, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The reference is to Canticles iv. 15, where the bride is called "a garden-spring, a well of living waters, and they flow from Lebanon;" comp. ver. 12, where she is called "a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." The *belly*, which has respect to an Old Testament mode of representing the relation between the Lord and his church, only to be found in Canticles, is from ch. vii. 3, combined with ch. iv. 15. Accordingly, whenever we meet with the bride there, we are to think of believers. The formula, with which the Lord quotes the passage, "as the Scripture says," should be heard as the cry, "Put off your shoes, for it is holy ground," by those who are yet incapable of understanding the book, or even abuse it to improper purposes. To that Song our Lord farther refers in Matt. ix. 15, when he compares himself to the bridegroom; and likewise in the parable of the bridegroom and the ten virgins. John the Baptist points to it in John iii. 29, and Paul in 2 Cor. xi. 1, Eph. v. 27, comp. with Song iv. 7, "Thou art altogether beautiful, my beloved, and there is no blemish in thee." There are other parts of this book also, which refer to the Song; the bride in ch. xxii. 17, xxi. 2, 9, the marriage supper of the Lamb in ch. xix. And it confirms the reference to the Song here, that the passage, ch. iv. 15, which is quoted by our Lord in the Gospel of John, that of ch. iv. 17, which forms the ground for "I will sup with him," and ch. v. 2, on which the clause, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," rests, are all quite contiguous to each other. The Lord stands at the door for every one who belongs to the number of his people, and has not yet committed the sin against the Holy Ghost; he did so even for Judas the traitor up to the moment when Satan entered into him, so that there is no occasion for the remark of De Wette, "If he still stood so near to them, their state could not have been so very perilous." The more perilous

the state was (if only it was not absolutely hopeless), the more must the Lord have stood at the door, and knocked the more loudly. The *knocking*, with which we are to associate calling, because this among the ancients was commonly connected with knocking, unless we may take the knocking itself as a symbolical calling, which, perhaps, is the simpler way :—This knocking is accomplished in various ways, by the word of God, and by the providences which stir emotions in the soul. Here it is done more immediately by this epistle. In the *promise* respect is not had to what may be experienced in a future state of being, which is first brought into view in the following verse ; but, as appears also from the parallel passages of the Gospel, to a relation to Christ, which may exist even in this troublous world, and with all true believers is found to be as a heaven upon earth, and that a light illuminates their darkness.

Ver. 21. *He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with me on my throne ; as I have overcome and have sitten down with my Father on his throne* ; *ver.* 2. *He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.* When Christ's people have continued stedfast in the conflict against all temptations, he will receive them at last into the participation of his dominion, and triumph over all hostile powers, and they shall see lying prostrate under their feet all that afflicted them with pain and trouble during the course of their present life. Comp. on ch. i. 9, ii. 26—28 ; and in regard to the words, "as I have overcome," etc., ch. v. 5, vii. 17, xxii. 1, Phil. ii. 9, Heb. xii. 2.

THE SEVEN SEALS.

Ch. iv. 1—viii. 1.

The seer is snatched up to heaven, and sees there a holy assemblage, in which all points to the judgment, which, for the benefit of his sorely oppressed church, the Lord is going to execute upon the ungodly world, ch. iv. What the whole scene was of itself fitted to suggest is then brought clearly out in ch. v., where a book with seven seals is delivered to Christ for the purpose of being opened, containing the judgments to be inflicted on the world. This

opening follows, and the judgments one after another become manifest in ch. vi. and in ch. viii. 1. Ch. vii. forms an intermediate episode, in which is represented the preservation of the faithful in the midst of the judgments which alight on the world.

Ch. iv. 1. *After this I saw, and behold a door was opened in heaven; and the first voice, which I had heard speaking with me as a trumpet, saying, come up hither, and I will shew thee what must be done after these things. After this*, Bengel, "After I had written the seven epistles from the Lord's mouth." The result of the call to go up to heaven through the open door, is that John, ver. 2, is *in the Spirit;* so that the command: Go up, is as much as, Be in the Spirit. The original passage is Ez. i. 1, "And it came to pass in the (in *my*, comp. Numb. iv. 23—30) thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heaven was opened, and I saw visions of God." What is said there in ver. 3, "The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel . . and the hand of the Lord was there upon him," is parallel. The words point to the misery of our natural condition, to which we are here born, and in which the heavens have no door open for us. Since the Messiah's time, the heaven has been opened (Matt. iii. 16, and especially John i. 52); and the power also has been given to his servants of ascending into heaven, and learning there the secrets of God. The words pre-suppose, that between this vision and the preceding one there was an interval, during which John was not in heaven or in the Spirit. For, in the last verse of the apocalyptic epistles the Spirit still speaks through him to the churches; so that he must then have been in the Spirit (comp. i. 10), or in heaven. That John here, before he received the revelation of the future, saw a door opened in heaven, furnishes Vitringa with the just conclusion, "that no one can easily attain to the understanding of these sacred emblems, excepting such as, freed from earthly cares and fleshly desires, have their mind loosed as it were from their body, and give themselves wholly up to heavenly things." And Bengel remarks, "It is not in our own will and power to handle divine things as we would; the measure, the nature, and the time, together with the thing itself, is entirely in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is shut to man, he cannot of himself discover; but where we find anything opened

to us, we must there make use of our eyes. To seek to ascend by one's own might, is the part of Lucifer; but when one has a call and a pull, as John had here, when the word was addressed to him 'come up hither,' then it is right to proceed. O may our minds be filled with such holy admiration, that we shall indeed withdraw ourselves from what is earthly and holds us in bondage, and shall direct our thoughts heavenwards to apprehend that, which Thou shewedst to thy servant, so that we may truly be improved and edified by it. Amen!" The words: the first voice, which I had heard speak with me as a trumpet, refer to ch. i. 10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet." The voice there, and therefore also here, belonged to Christ, who alone has power to raise above the earthly, to introduce into heaven, and especially to disclose the future in such an elevated state of mind. Bossuet: "Let it be observed, that it is always Jesus Christ who unfolds everything to the prophets, so that it is always the revelation and prophecy of Jesus Christ himself, as was said at the beginning." John is to be shewn what is to be done after these things. Accordingly, we are to expect even in ver. 2, ss., not a description of what perpetually is, but a symbolical shadowing forth of the future.

Ver. 2. *And immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold a throne lay in heaven, and upon the throne one sat.* The expression: I was in the Spirit, is purposely a literal agreement with ch. i. 10, in order to intimate, that here the *second* vision begins. Bengel: "He was at once lifted above all that is natural and placed amid divine things, had his whole soul filled, illuminated, and occupied by these." By his being in the Spirit, is marked his *complete* entrance upon the state of ecstacy. Without some previous partial experience of this state, John could not have seen the door that was opened in heaven. Züllig's exposition: "And presently I was [there, in heaven] in a sort of ecstacy, my spirit was snatched up thither, while my body remained upon earth," deserves no refutation. Bengel improperly remarks on being in the Spirit, "this extends to all the seals, trumpets, and vials." This vision does not extend beyond the seven seals. A quite new series begins with ch. viii. 2.—We have here not a representation of the usual heavenly state, but an assembly of counsel and judgment, in which a decision is come to regarding the ungodly

world. To this view we are led by ch. v., according to which all turns on the opening of the book with the seven seals, which has respect to the punishment of the world, for its enmity to God. To the same conclusion points also the representation given in this chapter of the scene itself; all the traits have at once a threatening and a consolatory character, are adapted to frighten the persecutors, to raise the persecuted to a joyful hope; they perfectly accord with the humour of John, as one who was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ, and of the companions in tribulation for whom he wrote. Representations of similar councils of judgment are to be found in 1 Kings xxii. 19, Isa. vi., Dan. vii. 9, ss., where the thrones were first set. It is not said elsewhere: a throne *lay* in heaven. The throne did not stand upon the earth, but it rested on the cherubim, which, according to ver. 6, were in the midst of the throne.[1] On the words: upon the throne one sat, Bengel remarks, "That it is the Father, whose majesty here shines forth on the throne, is sufficiently clear from this consideration, that here as elsewhere, he is distinguished from the Lamb, and from the seven Spirits, as we read in ver. 5 of this chapter, and in ch. v. 13. The kingdom is originally the Father's, and remains his. For, Christ sits on the Father's throne, ch. iii. 21, on the right hand of the Almighty Father." It is otherwise in Ezekiel. There one sat upon the throne, who resembled the Son of man. He does not distinguish between the Father and the Son, or the Father makes himself known in the Son. But Dan. vii. 13 is similar, as there one like the Son of man comes to the Ancient of days in the clouds of heaven. That the name of the person sitting is not given, is not to be explained with Herder, from his glory being such as to transcend all description ("the soul has no image to name him, language no word"), but simply because here only what was seen is described. In Ezekiel too, in ch. i. 4–27, for a like reason no name is given. Both hearer and reader must supply it.

Ver. 3. *And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and sardius stone; and a rainbow was round about the throne in*

1 That to *lay* is used here simply for standing, cannot be proved from Jer. xxiv. 1, LXX., John ii. 6, xix. 29. For what holds of baskets and vessels does not hold of a throne with feet.

sight like to an emerald. It is God's infinite glory that is here displayed, his grace toward the church, his punitive righteousness; all properties, which at the present stage come forth into action, and are fitted to inspire with courage the fainting souls of believers. The punitive righteousness presages destruction to the enemies of the church; the compassionate grace promises deliverance to the church; the holiness takes from those who stand under grace, all despondency, all hope from those who stand under wrath. As in the rainbow the *colour* of the precious stone was doubtless indicated, so is it also in respect to the jasper and the sardius. And according to the fundamental and parallel passages, afterwards to be noticed, which have this also in common with the one before us, that they describe an appearing of the Lord for judgment, we may reasonably expect that the two precious stones represent two different properties of God. Now the jasper is of diverse colours. But what sort the seer had in view is plain from the addition, "clear as crystal" in the later passage, ch. xxi. 11. According to ver. 23 of that chapter, the light of the city, which by ver. 11 was like a crystal-clear jasper, "the most precious stone," (the *first* foundation stone in ver. 19 is a jasper), is the *glory of the Lord*, his essential nature, the kernel of his personality, which, according to ch. iv. 8, is his holiness, not in the doctrinal, but the scriptural sense. Comp. also ch. xxii. 5. It is this which is represented here by the jasper. By σάρδιος the LXX. render the Hebr. אֹדֶם, the etymology of which already points to the red colour. The sardius, or carnelian, is "red, as red flesh, dark-red, tile-red, clay-red." Orpheus, de lapid. xvi. 5, speaks of the "blood-coloured sardius;" and Epiphanius says, "it is of a fiery red appearance and blood-like," (ἐστὶ δὲ πυρωπὸς τῷ εἴδει καὶ αἱματοειδής). That the sardius is here employed to represent the punitive righteousness of God, his anger, cannot be doubted when we look at the fundamental and parallel passages. The red colour, according to Meyer in his Hesperides, is "the light in its internal expansion, light in warmth, light in love or its opposite, anger. It must be stimulated by an object in order to appear so, and its appearance is its conquering." One might take the red here as the colour of blood, in the shedding of which the punitive righteousness of God manifests its energy, comp. vi. 4, xii. 3, xvii. 3, Isa. lxiii. 1, 2. But it is better to

take it as the colour of fire. For the fire of the divine anger suits admirably to the radiating light of the divine holiness; and then fire is quite a standing image in Scripture of the divine anger, and as such is employed particularly in the original passages of Ezekiel and the parallel passages of the Pentateuch. These passages we must come to consider more closely. In Ez. i. 4 it is said, in the description there given of the threatening and judgment-looking appearance of the Lord: "And I looked, and behold a whirlwind came from the north, a great cloud, and complicated fire and brightness to it (the cloud) round about (from the fire shining through), and out of the midst of it to look upon as chasmal, out of the midst of the fire." The chasmal denotes here the kernel of the personality, the holiness. That it betokens something of the brightest splendour there can be no doubt from the זֹהַר, light-lustre, which is put by the prophet as parallel to it in ch. viii. 2. The LXX. render it by *electrum*, a metal distinguished by its brightness, and composed of gold mixed with a fifth part of silver.[1] In Ez. i. 27 it is said: "And I beheld, and it was as chasmal, as the look of fire, that was enclosed round about (comp. Gen. xv. 17, like devouring fire); from the loins upwards (he was like chasmal) and from the loins downwards I saw as the appearance of fire." At ch. viii. 2, "And I beheld, and lo! there was the appearance as fire, from his loins downwards he was of the appearance of fire, and from his loins upwards he was to look upon as light-splendour, as the look of chasmal." The meaning of the last passage is excellently given by Züllig, "Below, toward the earth, the person on the throne appeared to me in the glowing ire of his function as judge and avenger, above in the pure splendour of his calm, untroubled, heavenly majesty." The fire is placed in the front of the description, because the main object was to present an image of God's anger toward Jerusalem; comp. Deut. iv. 24, "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God," ix. 3, and the remarks on fire as a symbol of the anger of God on Ps. l. 3. In Daniel vii. 9, 10, the garments of the Ancient of days were

[1] This Chasmal is different from Nehoschet Kalal. The three times it is used it is applied to the person who was throned upon the cherubim. It is on no account to be supposed that the feet of the beasts were so exhibited as if they were an immediate image of the person who was enthroned on the cherubim.

white as snow, and the hair of his head as pure wool; his throne was a flame of fire, and his wheels burning fire, a stream of fire went forth from him. The majesty and holiness there indicated by the clear brightness is not less appalling to the guilty than fire. It takes from the enemies of the church all hope of escaping the fire. In the Apoc. i. 14 we find the head and hair white as white wool, as snow, but the eyes like flames of fire, and the feet like burning metal. In Rev. x. 1 the countenance is like the sun, the feet like pillars of fire. From these original and parallel passages it is also to be supposed that the colours of the two precious stones did not intermingle with each other through the whole appearance, but that they respectively belonged to different parts of it. The *rainbow* round about the throne—in respect to which Bengel says, "Not the head merely of him who sat upon the throne, but the throne itself, in its whole height and breadth, was surrounded by it—indicates that *the judgment was to be an act of grace for the church.* The "round about the throne" is not said without meaning in respect to the rainbow and the seats of the four and twenty elders. These, the symbol of the church, are to be understood as enclosed in the circle, so that the church is represented as the object of the tender grace of God. The fundamental passage for this here and ch. x. 1, where the rainbow appears on the head of the angel, is Ez. i. 27, 28. There, around about the manifestation, which was radiant with the glowing brightness of fire, was a splendour; "as the appearance of the rainbow which is in the cloud in the day of rain, so is the appearance of the brightness round about." The truth symbolized is given thus by Grotius, "However strict the divine judgment may be, it still will not destroy the remembrance of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Isa. liv. 10 may serve as a commentary, "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." But the rainbow is not the symbol of grace generally; it is the symbol of grace returning after wrath. This is indicated in Ezekiel by the cloud; comp. the "great cloud" in ver. 4 and Rev. x. 1. Lange, in his Vermischten Schr. i. p. 5, says excellently, "The rainbow is the coloured reflection of the sun breaking forth upon the dark cloud

as it withdraws, the triumph of the sun over the floods; the brightness of the sun, of fire, of light, imprinted, as it were, on the cloud itself in token of its subjection." Accordingly, we are to suppose that the colour of the emerald, the green, is here named, not as the only one, but as that which predominated. This is even self-evident. For a simply green rainbow would be no rainbow at all. Bengel remarks, "Green is of all colours the most agreeable. If other things have made the eyes weak and tender, we find them refreshed by turning them on the green. The colours of white and red affect the vision much more, and if we hold long before us anything of a fiery red or a shining white, the sight is soon injured; but the green colour is intermediate between the two, and of a chaster description. When God represents himself as the jasper and sardius, he exhibits himself in his holiness and glory, in which respect he is frightful to men. But the green rainbow is a mark of the divine condescension, placability, and forbearance, which prevent us from being injured or consumed by those attributes of God, which are terrible to men. . . . We are not able to fix our eyes on the divine majesty and holiness, they frighten us away; but the friendliness of God allures us and inspires us with an assured confidence. We must present God to our view, not only as he shews himself in some one aspect, but in all that he makes known to us; there will still remain much behind of his infinite perfection. The testimonies which he has disclosed to us respecting himself, we must carefully put together, that we may attain to a complete knowledge, adoration, and service. If we look, for example, to grace alone, we shall soon obtain confidence; but this confidence may speedily in hearts like ours break forth into impiety. But if we have respect also to the majesty and holiness of God, we shall continue in a profound reverence, and our confidence in grace itself shall thereby be increased." Excellent observations in themselves, but too much overlooking the concrete reference of the vision; not taking into account the circumstance, that everything in it is directed to revive the church's confidence after having been deluged by the world. To him, for whom the rainbow is adapted, the jasper and sardius are also consolatory; but, on the other hand, the emerald also is terrible to him, for whom it is not.—Züllig is inclined to explain "the

image of a single-coloured green rainbow as an unnatural one. There should at least have been also yellow and red. For, green, yellow, and red, these are the fundamental colours, out of which are formed the seven well-known shades of the rainbow. But observe, it is precisely these two other colours that we have already found in the jasper and the sardius of the main figure. There can be no doubt, also, that these colours are combined together, and form with each other a composite arch, in such a manner that the green is not to be thought of as divided by a certain space from the main figure, but only as its outermost radiation." The whole image, then, must consist of a rainbow! The two inner colours give to the seer his image of Jehovah, the outer one the lustrous glory connected with it. But that we are not to think of a one-coloured green rainbow, that only the chief colour is rendered prominent, while the others are still supposed to exist, we have remarked already. But a singular image the rainbow, of him who sits upon the throne! The person sitting there is manifest, and according also to the fundamental passages in Ezekiel and Daniel, he is a person, from whom there issues so bright a splendour, white and red, that only this splendour can be seen. The significance of the rainbow is also overlooked by such a view; it can never be a lustrous glory. Since Gen. ix. it has been unalterably consecrated as a symbol of grace returning after wrath.

Ver. 4. *And round about the throne four and twenty thrones; and sitting on the thrones four and twenty elders, clothed with white garments, and on their heads golden crowns.* Bengel: "Here now we have a description of those who are about the Lord. We must here represent to ourselves not a half, but an entirely circular ring. Beside the chief throne, then, four and twenty other thrones with so many elders are appropriately added; but elsewhere the four beasts are nearer than the four and twenty elders, and both nearer than the many angels, ch. v. 11." The elders sit round about the throne, within the span of the rainbow. They are mentioned before the fuller description of the throne and of the cherubim, to indicate that the whole assembly has respect to the affairs of the church. Where the representatives of this sit in judgment with God, there only a favourable decision for them can be expected. The beasts are inseparable from the

throne itself, which rests upon them; they are not merely round the throne, but also under the throne, according to ch. vi.—That the elders are representatives of the church, there can be no question; is quite plain from ch. v. 8—10, where they hold in their hands golden vials full of incense, which are the prayers of saints, and sing a new song and say, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open its seals, for thou wert slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of all kindreds and tongues and peoples and nations"—a passage which shews that we cannot think of angels. That the four and twenty come into consideration as the double twelve, is rendered probable alone by ch. vii. 4, ss., where the twelve appears as the signature of the church generally, and according to which the twelve tribes of Israel are perpetuated in the church of the New Testament. Now, if we should seek for each of these tribes a double head, in accordance with the two oeconomies, there will very naturally present themselves the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles. The same four and twenty we find again in ch. xxi. At the gates of the New Jerusalem there stand, according to ver. 12, twelve angels, to which it is added, "and names written, which are the twelve tribes of the children of Israel," the ideal representatives of the twelve tribes, the shadowy forms, as it were, of the twelve patriarchs. On the twelve foundations of the walls are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. We meet with the first twelve also in ch. xii. 1: the woman, the church, has before the birth of Christ a crown of twelve rulers. The second twelve, the twelve apostles, who were manifestly chosen by Christ as the New Testament counterpart to the twelve patriarchs, we obtain from the undeniable reference of Christ to the declaration of our Lord in Matthew, ch. xix. 28, comp. Luke xxii. 30, "Then shall ye also sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel;" and from Rev. xx. 4, where a still more manifest reference to these passages is found, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them." The right view was given by Bossuet, "It is the totality of the saints of the Old and the New Testament, who are here represented by their chiefs and their leaders. Those of the Old appeared in the twelve patriarchs, and those of the new in the twelve apostles. The same totality of saints is represented

afterwards in the twelve gates of the holy city, on which were written the names of the twelve tribes; and in the twelve foundations of that city, on which were written the names of the twelve apostles, xxi. 12, 14. In a word, one sees in these twenty-four elders the whole church represented in its leaders." If the apostles formed the one-half of the heavenly senate of the church, the Apocalypse can only have been composed at the close of the apostolic age. According to the common supposition, the number four and twenty here must allude to the four and twenty classes of priests formed by David: the elders must be as it were the family-heads of the heavenly priesthood. But in addition to the separation this would make of the passage from ch. xii. 1, and xxi. 12, 14, and the want of any other point of connection in the book, there are strong reasons against the supposition. It is in itself not probable, that the author of the Apocalypse would refer to that purely human arrangement, which never received any special divine sanction. The remark of Züllig, that "the book hardly ever alludes to anything not biblical," has a wide application. Farther, although the elders were also priests, yet, appearing as they do here in a judicial scene, in the introduction to the seven seals, which God, in fellowship with his high council, suspends over the world for the good of his church, they are not employed in their proper character, but in a kingly capacity. To this latter points also the sitting on thrones, the bearing of golden crowns, and, as is clear from subsequent statements, the being clothed with white garments, which have been falsely regarded as a mark of the priestly character. In this connection also, where a sitting in judgment is the matter in question, the name *elder* designates only the governing character, the civic dignity; the elders correspond to the princes, who stood nearest to the throne of the earthly king in Israel, comp. Ez. viii. 11. Another conjecture, that the twelve number was doubled with respect to the admission of the heathen, must be wrong even on this account, that without any sure foundation it has proceeded from a doubtful suggestion, and runs counter, besides, to a fundamental view of the New Testament, and in particular of the Apocalypse, according to which believers from heathenism do not constitute a second party to those from Israel, but that there is only one Israel, which perpetuates itself in the Christian church, and into

which believing heathens were inserted—comp. on ch. vii. 4. Here, therefore, a modern representation has been violently pressed on Scripture.

There are two original passages in the Old Testament for the form of representation here adopted. First, Isa. xxiv. 23, "And the sun blushes and the moon is ashamed, for the Lord reigns, the Lord of hosts, upon Mount Zion, and at Jerusalem, and before his elders (to whom he will impart of his own glory) is honour." The elders appear there as the ideal representatives of the church in the time of salvation. The difference which Ewald was the first to suggest, that in Isaiah the elders appear on earth, here in heaven, is of little moment. For here also the abode of the elders is only *provisionally* in heaven. Then, Dan. vii. 9, 10. There, around the throne of the Ancient of days thrones are placed, the judgment sits, and the books are opened. Commonly it is the angels, who are thought of as being there the assessors of the divine judgment. So still Hävernick, "The great throne of God is surrounded by a multitude of elevated seats for the higher servants of God, the hosts of the elect ones that are round about him, Isa. vi., Job i., Rev. iv." But everywhere else the angels appear as *servants* in accordance with their name, and their designation as "ministering spirits sent forth to minister," in Heb. i. 14; but never as *judges*. The passages, Dan. iv. 10, 14, to which Maldanat has referred, must not be compared, for they belong to the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, who intermingled his heathenish modes of thought with what was given of God. In Daniel's explanation nothing is said of the angels.[1] The right view, that the representatives of the covenant people, as assessors in the judgment held upon the ungodly world, is the idea represented, was recognised even by the ancient Jews.[2] That the crowns are crowns of kings, is plain, especially from ver. 10, where they cast their crowns before the throne—the kings humble themselves before the King of kings—and also from the connection with the thrones; comp. Matt. xix. 28, where the apostles sit upon twelve

1 Ode, de angelis, p. 735: Hunc errorem correxisse videtur, Dan. v. 21, ubi illud non vocatur decretum vigilum, sed Excelsi, sc. Dei.

2 Tanchuma, fol. 52: Rabbini nostri dicunt: quid hoc est: sellae positae sunt? Respondetur: tempore futuro Deus S. B. sedebit, et angeli dabunt sellas magnatibus Israelis, et illi sedent. Et Deus S. B. sedet cum senioribus tanquam אב בית דין, princeps senatus, et judicabunt gentiles.

thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. So also as an insigne of royal dignity the crowns occur in ch. vi. 2, ix. 7, xiv. 14; comp. Matt. xxvii. 29, John xix. 12. *White* in the Revelation, as in Scripture generally, is the colour of bright splendour, the symbolical shadow of glory. One might say with perfect truth: white is like holy, but holy only in the sense of Scripture, not that of the current doctrinal theology. We are not to think of simple white, but of a glittering white—the white of light and snow; comp. Matt. xvii. 2, "And he was transfigured before them, and his face did *shine* as the sun, and his raiment was white *as the light*;" Mark ix. 3, "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white *as snow*; so as no fuller on earth can white them;" Luke ix. 29, "And as he prayed the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening," λευκὸς ἐξαστράπτων. Besides, Matt. xxviii. 3, Luke xxiv. 4, Acts i. 10, comp. with x. 30. In the Apocalypse, see ch. i. 14, "His head and his hair were white as white wool, as snow," and the interchange between white and glittering in ch. xix. 8, and xv. 6, comp. with xix. 14. As the symbolical representation of glory, white is the predominant colour in the manifestation of Christ, i. 14, vi. 2, xix. 11, the colour of the throne of God, xx. 11, of the angels as the holy ones in the scriptural sense, the exalted and the glorious. We must further take into account the colour of the righteous, especially of the perfect, who shine forth in the splendour of their virtues, iii. 18, xix. 8, vii. 14, and of the glory of God imparted to them, in imitation of that which was imaged forth at the glorification of Christ, and in fulfilment of the saying of Christ, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father," comp. iii. 4, 5. In the passage before us, it is best to regard both as united, as also in vii. 9. The connection, however, with the thrones and crowns shews that at all events the latter, which are ascribed only to the perfectly righteous, and do not at all belong to persons in this life, decidedly predominates. As the colour of innocence white is never used in Scripture. The purified high-priest receives, in Zech. ch. iii., instead of his filthy garments, not *white* but *clean* ones. In ch. vii. 14 of this book a distinction is made between *washing* and *making white*. The four and twenty elders appear also in ch. xi. 16, as co-regents with God: "the four and twenty elders who

sit before God on their thrones." But they are invested with this dignity as the representatives and the highest concentration of the whole church of believers. For of this, as a whole, it is said in ch. iii. 21, "He that overcomes will I give to sit with me in my throne, as I have overcome, and have sitten down with my Father in his throne." And in ch. ii. 26, "He that overcomes and keeps my works to the end, to him will I give power over the heathen, . . as I have received of my Father." Where there has come to be a hearty concurrence of will with that of the Sovereign Ruler, there one is received into the partnership of his government of the world, his judgments, his victories. It is the precious privilege of the Christian, that nothing comes to pass which he does not will, every thing that he does will—that he triumphs in God over all hostile powers, and with him rides upon the high places of the earth, and sees the whole world lying under his feet.

Ver. 5. *And from the throne proceed lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and seven torches of fire burn before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.* The lightnings, voices, and thunders are pre-intimations of judgment. That this is to be exercised for the good of the church, is clear from the connection with ver. 3, 4. Bengel: "To the saints on earth light and protection are thereby imparted, but to the enemies terror and destruction. The king's children should not be afraid of what he has in his arsenal." They are still not the judgment itself, but the matter-of-fact or symbolical announcement of it; as in Ex. xix. 16, voices, and lightnings, and thunders were seen and heard on the mount, as an indication beforehand of the awful judgment of God that was sure to overtake the transgressors of the law, insomuch that the people trembled in the camp. So also, in Ps. xcvii. 2, 3, before the scene of judgment itself begins, clouds and darkness are round about the Lord, and glowing fire issues from before him; and in Ps. l. 3, a fire devours before him, and all is tempestuous round about him (comp. also Ps. xviii. 8, and my commentary on these passages.) The seven seals are the embodiment of the judgments prefigured here and exhibited to view. In the same annunciatory character are lightnings mentioned in ch. viii. 5; and in ch. xi. 19, xvi. 18, they serve as a designation of the judgments actually inflicted. But the lightnings, etc., are

everywhere the precursors of the divine judgment, or this itself; never is "the praise of the Almighty in heaven" sounded by them, as Bengel supposes. Nor will the Old Testament fundamental passages suffer us to think of such a meaning. There thunders and lightnings are the standing symbol of God's manifestations of anger. The voices are constantly put in immediate connection with the thunders, and so indeed as to precede the other. In John vi. 1, xiv. 2, mention is made of the voice of thunder, and here in ch. x. 3 the seven thunders utter their voices. All this, together with the Old Testament usage, shews that we must not separate the voices from the thunders, and that we are not with Züllig to understand by them the inarticulate thunder-claps as contrasted with the audible sounds from heaven. It is best to regard the thunders as the kind, and the voices as the species, which here come more particularly into view. Bengel remarks excellently, "Whoever gives attention to what precedes in the weather, he knows, that thunder sometimes spreads itself far in the clouds, and continues for a considerable time (like the hollow roar of the sea), while sometimes there is a quick, sharp crack, which may more especially be considered as a voice, that merely peals on the ear. Thunder, however, in the proper sense is accompanied also with a shaking. These things are of a frightful nature, and yet at the same time agreeable. Frightful in respect to enemies, agreeable for such as are at one with God, and stand in his grace." John xii. 28–30 may be compared.—That the *seven torches of fire, which are the seven Spirits of God*, are connected as to the things indicated with the lightnings, voices, and thunders, might be inferred alone from the circumstance that the seven in them with the three of the latter together make up ten. They do not mean the Spirit of God in himself. Against that is, not only the plural, but also the expression "before the throne," here and in i. 4, where the Seer wishes grace and peace to the church from him who is, and who was, and who comes, and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne. The statement also in ch. v. 6, that "they are sent upon the whole earth," is against the view in question. What we are to understand are the operations of God's Spirit, which is at the same time the Spirit of Christ (ch. v. 6), and which is united to the Father by essential oneness of being; his operations ad extra, and here

indeed more especially as bringing chastisement and destruction. This is indicated by the πυρὸς, shewing that the discourse is of torches of *fire*, and fire being in the Apocalypse the standing symbol of God's anger and judgment, comp. for example i. 14, ii. 18, xix. 12, x. 1, xx. 10, xxi. 8, xiv. 10. In the Old Testament also torches of fire are only mentioned where respect is had to consuming and burning, Zech. xii. 6; Judges xv. 4, 5; Dan. x. 6. Comp. Rev. viii. 10, where mention is made of a great star burning like a torch. This is confirmed by the juxtaposition with lightning and thunder, and the context generally, where every thing bears a frightful character to the world, and hence a consolatory one to the church of God. Thoughts like the following, "They mark the multifariousness of the gifts which are bestowed on the church of the New Testament," (Vitringa); or, "They stand before the throne, that at the nod of their Master they may communicate themselves to any human spirit," (Züllig); or, "God himself makes all clear about him through his Spirit," (Hoffmann), do not at all suit the connection What follows also leads to the same result. The sea of glass, according to ch. xv. 2, mixed with fire, is the product as it were of the seven burning torches of fire, which are the seven Spirits of God. Even Isaiah in ch. iv. 4, speaks of the Spirit of judgment and of burning, of the Spirit of God which judges and burns—comp. Mal. iii. 3.

Ver. 6. *And before the throne as a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne four beasts, full of eyes before and behind.* Bengel says, "Mention is made of the seven lamps of fire and of the sea together; and it is said, as respecting that, so also respecting this, very emphatically, *before the throne.*—Afterwards, at ch. xv. 2, there is again the appearance as of a sea of glass; and instead of the seven torches of fire being brought into connection with it, the sea itself is mingled with fire." We have already remarked that the distinct connection of the torches of fire and the sea together is to be explained from the latter being the product of the former. God by his Spirit brings about the execution of what is right. The import of the sea we apprehend from the song, which in ch. xv. was sung by those who stood on it, and which forms a commentary on the symbol, after the manner of Scripture generally, in which sign and word go together. Accordingly, it denotes the

great and wonderful works of God, his righteous and holy ways, his just deeds become manifest. The sea of glass appears there as an antitype to the Red Sea, in which the Seer beheld an image of the great judgment of God. The original passage for the one before us, and for ch. xv. 2, is Ps. xxxvi. 7, "Thy judgments are a great flood." The judgments there are the judicial acts through which God destroys the wicked and aids his people. The comparison with the sea denotes, according to the connection, measurelessness. Against the flood of human wickedness stands the great flood, the broad ocean of the divine judgment (Gen. vii. 11, the only other passage where the expression great flood, תהום רבה, occurs.) The great flood has reference to the deluge, in which the judgment of God appears as in reality a great flood. Twice had the sea served as an embodiment of God's judgments, which are here described as immeasurable under its image,—at the deluge, to which the fundamental passage refers, and when the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea, to which reference is made in ch. xv. The words, "before the throne," rest on Ps. lxxxix. 15, xcvii. 2, "righteousness and judgment are the foundation of thy throne," that is, God's dominion maintains itself on the territory of what is just and righteous. These two passages in the Psalms again, rest on Ex. xxiv. 10, "And they beheld the God of Israel, and under his feet there was like the work of white (clear glittering, comp. on ver. 4) sapphire, and like the heaven itself in purity." They give an explanation of the symbol there. Upon the fundamental passage and the two passages in the Psalms again rests, Ez. i. 22, "And there was on the heads of the beasts something like a cloud, like the look of crystal, terrible (Michaelis: the splendour of which is so great that it blinded the eyes of the spectator), expanded over their heads above." Above this cloud stands the throne of God, according to ver. 26. From this passage we see the import of the crystal here in Ezekiel. It signifies the terribleness (comp. Hab. iii. 2, "Lord, I heard thy doing, I was afraid"), the awe-inspiring greatness and glory of the divine executions of judgment. Also according to ch. xxii. 1, "And he shewed me a stream of water of life, clear as crystal," it is not the transparency, but the shining clearness of crystal that is brought into consideration (comp. xxi. 11.) The *glass* is different from the crystal. That desig-

nates the rectitude and purity of the divine judgments—comp. ch. xxi. 21, "as transparent glass," and ch. xxi. 18, "like pure glass." In Ex. xxiv. 10 too there is found a double point, the clear splendour and its purity. To the purity of glass, as indicative of righteousness and truth, corresponds in ch. xv. 3 the "righteous and true are thy ways, thou king of saints." And to the clear and blinding glitter of crystal, as indicative of the frightfulness and glory of the divine acts of judgment, corresponds the "Great and wonderful are thy works, Lord God Almighty. Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name!" It is this also to which respect is had in the present symbol: the measureless character of the divine judgments, their absolute rectitude, their terrible glory—a view, if dreadful to the world, most consolatory to the church, which cannot look enough into this glorious mirror, and in the depths of this sea should lose all its cares, and sorrow, and pain—whose eye should be delivered from its tears, the moment the cloud vanishes which conceals this sea from its view—and whose highest problem it is to keep the eye shut in regard to the sea of the nations, and have it open for this holy sea before the throne of God. (Bossuet: "The sea commonly signifies in Scripture agitation and trouble; but here the idea is changed, and changed by the transparence and the likeness of crystal.")

In the midst of the throne, that is, under it, and round about the throne—since the throne does not quite cover them, and their heads appear from below it[1]—the Seer perceives four beasts; or, more exactly, living creatures, full of eyes behind and before.[2] These are the Cherubim, which meet us in the Old Testament, especially in the symbolical forms of the law and in Ezekiel. The signification of this symbol discovers itself from the name here given to the Cherubim. They are called ζῶα, living beings, corresponding to the חיות of Ezekiel. Consequently they are the representation of living beings, of all that is living on the earth. God appears as enthroned above the Cherubim, in order to impress

1 That the Cherubim here do not, as Zullig supposes, stand merely beside the throne, is clear, not only from the ἐν μέσῳ which is violently rendered by him, but also from the ἔκειτο in ver. 2.

2 Bengel: "Ζῶον and θηρίον essentially differ, φύσεις ζώων καὶ θυμοὺς θηρίων, Sap. vii. 20."

on the minds of those, who stand in awe of him, his absolute supremacy over all that is earthly. When the earthly creature of the church of the Old Covenant became alarmed, it had only to direct its eye to him, who sat enthroned on the Cherubim, and its fear vanished. To this representation of God corresponds the epithet, God of Hosts, Zebaoth, pointing quite as exclusively to the dominion of God over the heavenly powers, as the other to his dominion over the earthly. The God—exclaims here to the Seer and to the church the sight of the Cherubim under the throne—who is preparing to judge the world, is the God of the whole earth, whom all that lives and moves on it obeys, and who can turn all it contains into weapons of vengeance against the apostate. Woe to him, who has this God for his enemy, happy he who has him for his friend! The same object is served in the main by the appearance of God above the Cherubim in Ezekiel, ch. i. and 10, where God comes to execute judgment on apostate Israel. There, beside the living beings, which are more immediately denoted by the Cherubim, the powers of nature are also symbolized by the wheels beside the Churubim, the import of which is partly explained by ch. x. 13, "the wheels, they were called the whirlwind in my ears," (comp. Ps. xviii. 10, where the wind is connected with the cherub, "He rode upon the cherub and did fly, and floated on the wings of the wind," God comes in the full glory of his being, as the Lord of the beings and powers of nature); and partly also from ch. x. 6, where the fire that was to burn the wicked city Jerusalem, is taken from the midst of the wheels. To the wheels in Ezekiel corresponds in Ps. cxlviii. 8, "Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind, that fulfils his word." For the refutation of those, who would understand by the Cherubim superior angels, what was advanced by Vitringa is quite sufficient: "These four creatures are throughout this vision connected with the assembly of elders, and are distinguished, not only from the angels, but also from *all* angels, as is done in ch. vii. 11. In ch. v. the whole heavenly assembly that was before the throne, is divided into two choruses or classes. The beasts and the elders formed the one chorus, ver. 8, and the angels the other, ver. 11." Everywhere we find the territory of the Cherubim put in marked separation from that of the angels. The Cherubim never do the service of the *malakim* or messengers,

never do the part of ministering spirits sent forth to minister. Their business is only that of being, first, under the throne of God (of a material *supporting* we are not to think either here or in Ezekiel), then of symbolizing the truth, that God is the God of the whole earth, the God of the spirits of all flesh, or of praising and glorifying God. This was done, not only here, but also in Ezekiel, when the prophet, ch. iii. 12, heard a loud voice saying, "Praised be the glory of the Lord (who now rises up) from his place." For their existence was a matter-of-fact celebration of God's praise (comp. the call made on all in heaven and earth to praise God, as bearing on it the marks of God's glory, in Ps. cxlviii., and the poetical change from the matter-of-fact praise into a verbal one in Ps. xix. 2, ciii. 21), and he was farther entitled to it for the benefits conferred by him on his creatures upon earth. Finally, in addition to these two functions of the cherubim, they have a part to do in prefiguring the judgments, which are to fall upon the earth, as at the opening of the seals in ch. vi. 1, ss., they call out to the Seer, "Come and see," and in ch. xv. 7, they stretch out the seven vials to the seven angels. They come forth here as representatives of the earth, which is to be affected by the divine judgments. That the Cherubim are merely symbolical figures, is manifest from their whole bearing. They have always but a few words to utter. From these functions of the Cherubim, and especially from the circumstance of their being under the throne of God, the God who sits enthroned upon the Cherubim, all such notions are exploded, as that they are the four evangelists, the most eminent teachers of the church (so Vitringa, who labours in vain to dispose of the troublesome fact, that the beasts are nearer the throne than the elders), the office-bearers of the church, etc. These notions, besides being untenable in themselves, are quite unsuitable here, where the object was to impart consolation in the presence of a seemingly omnipotent world, and pledge the certainty of a victory being gained over it; and equally so in Ezekiel, where the object is to dispel the illusions of those, who dreamt they could escape the vengeance of an angry God. So that it were entirely out of date to attempt any revival of them now.—That the Cherubim were four, arises from *four* being the signature of the earth. Bengel already remarks, "Scripture often describes visible nature by the

four quarters of the world, Ps. lxxxix. 13, and in Revelation also mention is frequently made of the four corners of the earth, ch. vii. 1, xxi. 13." In Ps. cxlviii., of those who must praise the Lord on the land, there are four times four, and four in particular of living creatures, because four is the signature of the earth. We find the same four of living creatures in Gen. vii. 21, 23. In Ezekiel the number four has still greater play: the four beasts have each four faces and four wings, i. 6. The beasts *are full of eyes before and behind* In the first description of the Cherubim, Ezekiel merely says in ch. i. 18, that the felloes of the wheels connected with the cherub were full of eyes, while in the second description, ch. x. 12, he says in perfect unison with John, "And their whole flesh, and their backs, and their hands and their wings, were full of eyes round about." The meaning of the eyes we learn from Rev. v. 6, according to which the Lamb has seven eyes, "which are the seven Spirits of God that are sent forth upon the whole earth"—comp. Zech. iv. 10, where the operations of the Lord's Spirit are set forth under the image of the seven eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro in the whole earth. The eye is the organ, and, as such, the corporeal image of the *Spirit*. The Cherubim being full of eyes indicates, that the whole living creation is *inspirited*. According to the doctrine of Scripture, all life, not merely the intellectual and spiritual, but the physical also, is of God, the source of life, the God of the spirits of all flesh, Numb. xvi. 22, xxvii. 16; Hebr. xii. 9; comp. Gen. i. 2, ii. 7; Eccl. xii. 7, "The spirit returns to God who gave it;" Ps. civ. 29, "When thou hidest thy face, they are frightened, when thou gatherest their breath, they vanish and return to their dust." The eyes of the Cherubim, considered as symbolical of the powers of God working in creation, contribute to the matter in hand; they serve as an encouragement to the pious, as a source of terror to the wicked. So understood, we can also understand how in ver. 8 there should be a repeated allusion to the eyes in connection with the song of praise by the Cherubim: this song forms a commentary on their being full of eyes, round about and within. The exposition of Bengel and others, by which the eyes denote wisdom and knowledge, is quite erroneous.

Ver. 7. *And the first beast was like a lion, and the second*

beast was like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. It is certainly not accidental that the lion and the eagle should begin and close the series, the less so as the order here is different from what we find in Ezekiel. These are the most warlike among the four beasts, therefore the strongest matter-of-fact prophecies of that destruction which was impending over the world; the fittest representatives of that power of God, which here especially comes into view. He who made the lion and the eagle, will also unfold his power of judgment, and rebuke in his dispensations towards his people—comp. in regard to the lion Isa. xxi. 8, 9, in regard to the eagle here ch. viii. 13.—It is worthy of remark, that in the second place, it is not the ox that is mentioned, but the calf, as was the case also in Ez. i. 7.[1] This shows, that where the ox is mentioned in the descriptions of the Cherubim, it is employed only as a representative of cattle generally. Hence the old Jewish saying (Schoettgen, p. 1108), "There are four which take the first place in this world: man among the creatures, the eagle among birds, the ox among cattle, and the lion among wild beasts;" and Bengel's homologous remark, "The lion is the first among wild beasts, among those that are tame the ox, among all creatures that have a living body man, and the eagle among birds." Right against those, who instead of considering the individual living beings as representatives merely of their several classes, take them as symbols of the particular manifestations of the fulness of life that is in God (as the ox, for example, according to Bähr in his Symbolik, I. p. 343, the symbol of creative, or productive power.) In that case the calf or young ox could not possibly have been used instead of the ox. This shows, that in the other places also where the ox is put, we are not to think of its productive power. Such a view, besides, loses itself in the territory of mere opinion, while it admits of no doubt that the lion holds the first place in the forest, the eagle among birds (comp. Job xxxix. 27, ss.), the ox or calf among tame animals. To this result we are also led by the designation of "flying" being attached to the eagle. This must refer not to the *act* of

1 That the μόσχος here denotes the calf, is clear alone from the fundamental passage of Ezekiel, where עֵגֶל is the corresponding word. Comp. Ps. lxviii. 30, where the bulls of the princes are set against the calves of the people.

flying, but only to the *power* of flight, and shows that the eagle appears here as the representative of all winged creatures.—"In the third beast," says Bengel, "a peculiar mode of expression is used: it had the face as of a man; whence we may infer, that this beast had the resemblance of a man, not throughout, but only in the face." But the fact is plainly not given correctly here; the right conclusion, as Vitringa perceived, is, that the other beasts were not throughout, but only in the visage, unlike man. Each of the beasts had his peculiar visage, and the third that of a man's countenance; but the human form belonged to them all. This is implied in its being said of the third, not that it was like a man, but that it had the face as of a man. The likeness of a lion, an eagle, and a calf, in the others, is confined by this to the face. In Ez. i. 5 it is expressly said, "And this is their appearance, they have the form of a man." They have there a man's erect gait and his hands. In Rev. v. 8, xix. 4, the beasts fall down with the elders before the Lamb and worship, which had been incongruous, if two of them had been quadrupeds. From the whole position, which was given to man in the Mosaic history of the creation among the living creatures, there could not be a simple co-ordination of his form along with the forms of the other and inferior parts of the animal creation. The human type must predominate in the personification of all living, and the rest be content with a representation in the countenance alone.—In regard to the point, in what does the description given of the Cherubim in the Revelation really differ from that in Ezekiel (as distinguished from the false differences in Züllig), we simply quote the just remarks of Vitringa, "The Cherubim of Ezekiel have each the four faces of these beasts. But this as to the substance is not of essential moment. For these beasts, most intimately connected together, form, as it were, one beast-existence, which Ezekiel calls חַיָּה, the living (i. 20, 21, 22), and it is a matter of indifference, whether all the properties are represented as belonging to each of the four, or singly in each."

Ver. 8. *And each of the four beasts has six wings, and round about and within they are full of eyes, and have no rest day and night, and they say: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was, and who is, and who comes.* The Cherubim here have not *four* wings, like those in Ezekiel, but

six, like the Seraphim in Isaiah, ch. vi. The wings also in this connection must serve for the glorification of God, as a terror to those who are enemies to him, a consolation to those who are friends; and this is confirmed by a comparison of the fundamental passages, from which the wings are borrowed, and from which, since this borrowing cannot possibly be without meaning, we must also adopt what is there said regarding their import and design. Bengel remarks briefly, "The chief virtues are thereby indicated, in the exercise of which the heavenly watchers give honour to the divine holiness, namely, fear or respect, since they do not look boldly, humility, since they veil themselves before that splendour, and alacrity in obeying the divine commands." And again more particularly: "By the three pairs of wings and their diverse use, is indicated the chief excellences in a holy creature, which has either not erred through sin, or has been again purified from it, and becomingly serves the great God. These excellences are respect, humility, and the spirit of obedience. The Seraphim cover their faces, so that they may not boldly look upon the divine Majesty, but with the profoundest reverence; as they also do not say, holy art thou, but speaking one to another of the divine Majesty, holy is he. They cover their feet, that they may in some measure be concealed from God's sight, though free from all sin, yet still in a feeling of proper creaturely abasement. They fly and move about in full activity, praising the Lord and executing his will." But all this serves not for the glorifying of the Seraphim and the Cherubim, but of God. How glorious must he be, how rich in supplies of help for his people, how mighty for the destruction of his enemies, before whom the concentration of created life so profoundly humbles itself, and with deepest reverence obeys! Thus understood, the wings of the Cherubim are found to be on the same line with their eyes, and their thrice exclamation of "holy." The clause "they are full of eyes round about (in front) and within (in the back parts)," would be a needless repetition, if it did not stand in close connection with what follows; and because they are wholly penetrated by the powers of God, therefore, etc. The words, "they have no rest day and night, saying," alludes to Ps. xix. 3, "Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge." The simple thought is, that the heavens with their starry

host unceasingly show forth God's glory; while by day the sun shines, by night there are the moon and the stars. As the heavens without ceasing declare the glory of God, the God of hosts, so also do the Cherubim or the creatures upon earth. The "holy, holy, holy," which is taken from Isa. vi., and is found also in Ps. xcix., is at the same time a threefold woe to the world which has this God for its enemy (comp viii. 13), and a threefold "Lift up your heads" to the church, which stands under his protection. Holy, holy, holy, according to his glory as manifesting itself in our state of being. That we must supply thus, is clear from the connection with the words: they are round about and within full of eyes; and also from what follows in ver. 9, according to which the beasts not only give honour and glory to God, but also *thanks*, which they could only do if they celebrated God's holiness on the ground of their own existence. That holiness is not merely the highest purity in God, that it rather denotes the infinite exaltation of God above all that is created and finite (see what is said in my Comm. on Ps. xxii. 3), is clear alone from the reference the Cherubim make to their own existence, and also from the epithet, "the Almighty," which has respect to holiness as its ground: holy, because all-ruling and almighty. The right view was given by Bengel. Among other things he says, "Holy, in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, is as much as separated; and when God is called Holy, his quite separate, his peculiar excellence is thereby indicated—that, namely, which is composed of his divine properties, throwing by their splendour everything else into the shade, since he is incomparably and indescribably removed, not only from all that is impure, but also from all that is creaturely. God stands apart from all: he is, and he works by himself, from himself, in himself, through himself, for himself. See 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. Therefore he is the first and the last, the one and eternal, living and blessed, infinite and unchangeable, almighty, all-seeing, wise and true, righteous and faithful, gracious and compassionate. Hence it comes to pass that holy and holiness are of much the same import as God and Godhead; and as one says of a king: his Majesty, so the Scripture says of God: his Holiness, Hebr. xiii. 10. The Holy Spirit is God's Spirit. The holy is often used as a name, when God is spoken of, Isa. xl. 25; 1 Sam. ii. 2; Ex. xv. 11. And as God

swears by his name and by his soul, so he also swears by his holiness, that is by himself. He is *sanctified* when he is known and worshipped as the true God. This holiness is often named the glory; often are his holiness and glory celebrated together, Lev. x. 3; Isa. vi. 3." Bengel further remarks on "the Almighty," &c., "This is the description of him to whom the epithet, Holy, was applied, and at the same time the reason why it was applied. The beasts say: God the Almighty, for which the elders say: our God, ver. 11. The Almighty! he is very often so named in the Revelation, because he there peculiarly shows himself in his power over all—in his glory over all that is visible and invisible." The expression: who comes, refers, according to the parallel passages (see in ch. i. 4), to the future developments and triumphs of the kingdom of God, who, as he has shown in the past and present what he was and is by displays of his glory and almightiness, so he will also come to introduce the kingdom over the whole earth—comp. ch. xi. 17, "We thank thee, Lord God Almighty, that thou hast taken thy great power and reignest." On the ground of the declaration, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God the Almighty," prophecy may be said to be based. He that has preserved his holiness will also come, without any one being able to prevent his arrival. "His work can no one hinder, his work will no one neglect, if he will do what is for the good of his children." So that all that is in the verse, the wings of the Cherubim, their eyes, their ceaseless holy, holy, holy, serves the purpose of reviving the languishing spirits of the church, in the presence of a persecuting and apparently omnipotent world, and to lay a foundation for what is announced in detail, in the following vision of the seven seals. Whoever has for his support Him who sits upon the Cherubim, can find nothing in a whole world of opposition which should make the giant shrink into a dwarf.

Ver. 9. *And when the beasts give*[1] *glory and honour and thanks to him, who sits on the throne, who lives for ever and ever*, ver. 10, *the four and twenty elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, and say*, ver. 11, *Lord, thou art*

1 The future denotes here, after the Hebrew usage, that which repeats itself, continued action, that which regularly and continuously exists—comp. the ζήσεται in Matth. iv. 4, the δικαιώσει in Rom. iii. 30, and ἀδυνατήσει in Luke i. 37.

worthy to receive the glory and the honour and the might; for thou hast made all things, and through thy will they were and are created. In the Old Testament style, glory, strength, greatness, &c., are given to the Lord, in the sense of being ascribed to him—comp. Deut. xxxii. 3, "Give greatness to our God;" Ps. xxix. 1, "Give to the Lord, ye sons of God, give to the Lord glory and power;" Ps. xcvi. 7. So, here glory and honour are given in the acknowledgment of God and ascription of thanks to him, as they are also received in ver. 11.[1] According to this usage, glory and honour, which refer to what is peculiarly God's, might properly be joined with the thanks, which proceed from the Cherubim; the former are given in the acknowledgment of God, the latter in the offering of praise. In the elders' song of praise, likewise, power might be put in the room of thanks. The Cherubim, in whose formation divine power has unfolded itself, give thanks for this unfolding, the elders satisfy themselves with a simple ascription of praise on account of it.—In regard to the words, "they cast their crowns before the throne," Vitringa remarks, "This refers to the Oriental custom. For eastern monarchs, as they love to rule over kings, and to be styled kings of kings, doubtless did not admit these to testify their homage, and hold intercourse with them, unless they laid aside their crowns. This is in itself probable, and the Roman emperors also desired such honour to be given to them.[2] But it is not to be overlooked, that here it is not said, the elders laid aside their crowns, but that they cast them down; shewing, that it was in a manner heavy and burdensome for them to wear their crowns in the presence of God. So lively was the feeling in them of their own littleness and unworthiness; so profound their reverence toward the divine Majesty. —It is peculiar to all, who truly reign with God and Christ in the church, that, conscious of their own unworthiness, they venerate with the deepest reverence the majesty of God and Christ; and wish to arrogate no glory or honour to themselves in the

[1] On the λαβεῖν there, we are not to compare ch. xi. 17, but ch. v. 12. This is evident from the article alone.

[2] "An example is given in Tiridates, king of the Parthians in Tacitus, Annal. l. xiv. c. 29: Progressus ille ad sedem, quae effigiem Neronis sustinebat, caesis ex more victimis, *sublatam capite diadema imagini subjecti.* Another is given by Josephus in Herod, when going to supplicate Augustus, Ant. l. xv. c. 10: Κἀπειδὴ κατέπλευσεν εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἀφῄρητο μὲν τὸ διάδημα κ.τ.λ."

church." Bengel remarks, "The four beasts do not precisely say, thou art holy, etc., but they turn away a little out of profound reverence, and say: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.' But when the four and twenty elders fall down, they venture to exclaim: 'Worthy art thou.'"—The adoration of the Cherubim turns on God's almighty power as manifested in creation; and so does that also of the elders. That the doxology of the elders has respect to the same fact as that of the Cherubim is indicated by the article, *the* glory, etc., shewing that they simply respond to the doxology of the Cherubim. There is also a reference in the background to the glorious completion of his kingdom, which God must as certainly bring about as he made the world. The adoration is given to him as sitting on the throne, and addressing himself to the execution of the world's judgment. In a like respect has the creation already been mentioned in the New Testament, beng "the foundation and basis of all other displays of goodness, which are in a manner the continuation of it," (Vitringa.) So in Ps. civ. the celebration of God's praise from the works of creation is intended to awaken confidence in the church in regard to the final victory of the righteous over the wicked, of the church over the world, which had the ascendancy at the time the Psalm was composed. In Jer. x. 11 it is said, "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth and from under heaven." Comp. also Isa. xliii. 1; Acts iv. 24. In the Revelation itself, the creation appears as a pledge for the completion of the kingdom of God, in ch. x. 6, "And he swore by him that lives for ever and ever, who made the heavens and what is therein, and the earth, and what is therein, that henceforth there should be no more delay;" and ch. xiv. 7, "Fear God, and give him the glory, for the time of his judgment is come, and worship him who made heaven, and earth, and sea, and the rivers of water." The Creator must necessarily be the Redeemer of his people, and the judge of the apostate. If any one holds fast by the article of the creation, he will be assailed by no doubts regarding the completion of God's kingdom.—The expression: Thou hast made, marks the creative energy of God. As this was accomplished by a mere word, it was quite appropriate to bring out the result by the express words, which have been found a difficulty by many expositors, "They were and are created." In

Gen. i. 7 also it is said, "And God made the firmament, and divided between the waters under the firmament and above the firmament, and *it was done so*." See besides, Ps. cxix. 90, "Thou hast established the earth, and it stood;" Ps. xxxiii. 9. —The general predominance of the number three in ver. 8—11 is noticeable: Holy, holy, holy; the Lord, God, Almighty; who was, who is, and who comes; glory, honour, thanks; they fall down, they worship, they cast; thou hast created, they were, and are created. We quote Bengel's remarks at the close of his exposition of this chapter: "Such is the prophet's description of the divine holiness and glory, and the manner in which these are celebrated by those who are so near him, and yet look upon us as their companions. Now, if we only consider in what a filthy world we are situated, what an abyss of sin, what a bog and pool it is, how can we avoid feeling the greatest disgust! Isaias exclaimed in such circumstances, Woe is me, I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. But on this very account we must strive after the true purification, and keep ourselves unspotted from the world. The representation there given of God's holiness would be a frightful thing to us, if we had to do with him alone, without a mediator. We should have to say, who among us can dwell with a consuming fire? who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings? But the Son of God has provided a way of access for us. Still, before so great a God we must maintain a becoming reverence and respect, and his holiness and glory ought to make a profound impression on us, so that his word may lead to such blessed fruits in our experience as it yields in obedient spirits. With many, indeed, there is the want of any right knowledge of God. Could we lay open souls, as we do a corpse or a fruit-tree, oh! what a sad state should we often have disclosed to us! Had people such thoughts of divine things as accorded with the truth, they would not so readily lose themselves in the concerns of time, be swallowed up of the flesh, and be so regardless of salvation. One cannot properly express how meanly many conceive of the great

[1] That the ἦσαν and ἐτίκσθησαν refer to the preservation (Bengel), is opposed by the fundamental passage, Ps. cxlviii. 5, "He commanded, and they were made." Ewald's predilection for the ill-supported reading οὐκ ἦσαν, cum non erant creata sunt, destroys the three number.

God. They imagine to themselves a mighty Lord in heaven, whom they must regard on account of their bodily nourishment, so that he may send to them good weather and the like, and who deem it matter of praise if they say a good word for him from time to time, and sometimes keep themselves pious and retired. For the rest, there is no need of being so exact, he will be satisfied with what has been done. Then they think that, when they can no longer remain upon the earth, they shall still have time to lay hold of his grace, as he will not deal with them in severity. Ah! it is another thing to meet God aright! He is a holy God with whom we have to do. If the beings who dwell so near about his throne act so reverentially toward him, how much more humbly does it behove us to conduct ourselves who dwell in cottages of clay! Were our hearts but penetrated with a just dread of him, we should also come to posses an assurance of his favour, confidence in him, desire after him, delight in him, and a more zealous endeavour to do what is pleasing in his sight."

Chap. v. Vitringa thus indicates the contents of this chapter: "First the presentation of a book, sealed with seven seals, which is delivered to the Lamb, that is, Jesus Christ, to be opened, ver. 1—7; then, the celebration of Jesus Christ as the Lamb who was slain and must open the book with the seven seals, consisting of doxologies and songs of the heavenly hosts, ver. 8—14. The doxologies belong partly to the beasts and the elders, ver. 8, 9, 10, partly to the angels, ver. 11, 12, and partly to all creatures, ver. 13. The sequel to this solemn glorification is the response of the beasts, and the worship of the elders, ver. 14." It would be more correct to say that ver. 9—12 contain the celebration of the Lamb's praise by the four beasts, the elders and the angels, and that in ver 13, 14 the Father and the Son are glorified by all creatures, through the concurring voices of their representatives, the elders and the beasts.

Ver. 1. *And I saw on the right hand of him who sat upon the throne, a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals.* Schöttgen: "That book records the sentence, which is given by the judge and his councillors against the enemies of the church. But the vast number of the divine sentences of condemnation is indicated, these being supposed to exist in such a multitude, that the parchment was written within and

without." We have the prototype of this book in Ezek. ch. ii. 9, 10 (a passage which again rests on Jer. xv. 16), "and I looked and lo! a hand was stretched out to me, and behold in it a book-roll. And he spread it out before me, and it was written before and behind, and in it was written lamentation, and mourning, and woe." The book contained the divine word, which Ezekiel had to announce, and was the archetype of the book of his prophecies. The book here likewise is the archetype of the book or section of the seven seals in the Revelation. Besides the passage before us, ch. x. 2, also rests on that of Ezekiel, and indeed still more closely. For there, as in Ezekiel, (1) the subject discoursed of is an *open* book ("he spread it out before me;") (2) that book also respects the fate of a degenerate church, has to do with the world in the church, while the book here contains the judgment upon the world by itself; (3) and that book, like the one of Ezekiel, was eaten by the prophet. The question now arises, whether this book, which Bengel describes as "a concealed sevenfold order of very copious and manifold contents," "one in accordance with the dignity of the theatre disclosed to our view in the preceding chapter, and with the solemnity of all that we are to see and hear in this chapter," whether it is the archetype of the whole of the Revelation from chap. vi., or only of the section of the seven seals, ch. vi.—viii. 1. The former opinion is most commonly embraced, but the latter is the only correct one. It becomes perfectly established, whenever it is understood, what is elsewhere to be proved, that the seven seals, with which the book alone has to do, come entirely to an end at ch. viii. 1, that the Revelation is composed of a series of independent portions, and that an entirely new series begins at ch. viii. 2. If this book were to be regarded as the archetype of the whole Apocalypse, we should have nothing new to begin that second book with at ch. x. Its being written within and without—pointing to the rich and varied contents of the book—cannot be pressed against the limitation to ch. vi. 1—viii. 1. We have only the sketch in what the prophet communicates to us of the contents of the book. There is a great deal to be read between the lines. The judgments which he marks in rough outlines, consist each of a vast assemblage of many single calamities, which were fully noted in the original. It may still be urged, however, that ch. iv. and v.

appear to be too large and majestic as an introduction for a single series: the building seems too little for such a porch. But it is to be borne in mind that this series is the very first after the preliminary portions, and substantially the introduction belongs to the whole.—There is this further objection also against the reference of the book to the whole, that the whole runs out into an extended description of the New Jerusalem. But this could not have existed in the book with seven seals; it could be occupied with nothing of a minute and extended nature but what respects the enemies of the church. "Not merely," says Züllig, "is it much, but it is also frightful; for this is implied in the reverse side being also written, because such was done in the exemplar referred to in Ezekiel, where there was nothing but lamentation, and mourning, and woe." It has appeared, that the whole of the preparatory vision in ch. iv. bears a threatening character, that it suspends nothing but judgments over the enemies of the church.—The book was written *within* and *without;* properly, within and *behind.* Book-rolls were usually written only within. Only when from the fulness of matter the inner side did not suffice, the exterior was also brought into use.—The book was in the right hand of him who sat upon the throne[1]; indicating that the book had not its settled place there, but that only for this action was it found in the hand of him who sat on the throne. The Seer beholds it still in motion, as it were, to this place.—The expression: out of the right hand, in ver. 7, corresponds to: in the right hand, here. Accordingly, the right hand comes into view simply as that to which any thing is presented. If it were understood with Bengel, as "the overruling might of God," we should still not be able even then to say with him, "This indicates the divine power, since the great God has every thing visible and invisible in his power, as the Creator and Governor of all, and shews his unspeakable majesty in all his works;" but the idea would simply be, that God alone absolutely possesses the knowledge of future things.—That the book was in the right hand of him, *who sat on the throne,* shews, that its subject was of a judicial nature, as is clear also from the entire

1 Properly, toward the right hand; comp. the ἐπί likewise in ch. iii. 20, xv. 2, xx. 1; Matth. xxvii. 29, where the other reading ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ is only to be taken as explanatory.

contents of ch. iv. That the judgment affects the enemies of the church, was plainly intimated by ch. iv. 4. "We would meanwhile," writes Vitringa, "with the utmost confidence draw from this remarkable image the conclusion, that nothing takes place in the world and the church, which has not been determined in God's counsel and judgment. This may well administer the greatest consolation to the church in times of trouble."

The book appears as *sealed with seven seals*. The signification of this sealing is well given by Vitringa, as meaning that "the divine decrees before they are carried into execution, or have by God been antecedently disclosed, are discoverable by no one of the immortal angels or of mortal men; they are shut and concealed from all." The figurative representation rests upon several passages in the Old Testament, in which a shut and sealed prophecy is all one with the dark and incomprehensible—Isa. xxix. 11; Dan. viii. 26, xii. 4, 9 (see my Beitr. Th. I., p. 215, ss.) The *seven* seals denote, not "the carefulness, firmness, and holiness of the sealing" (Züllig), but that the darkness, which rests upon the future, was not a partial, but a complete one: the book-roll was sealed above, below, and all over in the middle. This is clear from the single fact, that whenever a seal was removed, a portion of the contents became known. The seven seals are, so to speak, not the material, but the *theological* cause of the inaccessible character of the book. Whenever a seal was taken away, a portion of the contents became known. It is to be observed, that it is not the reading which is spoken of in regard to particular seals, but merely that by opening each seal a new part of the book-roll was disclosed to view, another and another portion of God's decrees or his judgments upon the world were made manifest. A too material view here has involved interpreters in great difficulties, and led them into untenable propositions. A book sealed with seven seals appears to have become accessible only when the whole seven seals were removed; but here a portion of the contents is disclosed with the removal of each particular seal. Grotius, Vitringa, and their followers, hence suppose, that the book was composed of seven leaves, each of which had its particular seal. But this extraordinary circumstance would have required to be mentioned, and

John also would not have been able to speak of having from the first seen seven seals. The book had without doubt the common form: a roll, on which outside seven seals were impressed. Others think, that what was communicated at the opening of the particular seals, had not formed a constituent part of its contents. The part that became manifest only with the opening of the last seal, must alone be "the secret of the future world." But according to this view we should properly learn nothing regarding the contents of the book within the series itself. As certainly as this series stands by itself, so certainly must what was seen at the opening of each seal indicate the contents of it. With the mere fact that the opening was an object of great desire with John, the church, which was sighing under the persecutions, "Lord, how long," was no way benefited. According to ch. i. 1, God gives to Jesus Christ the revelation of the future, that he might show to his servants what should come to pass. Nor can we perceive what relation the things reported at the opening of each seal stand in to the book, if they do not constitute its contents. And for any other contents we shall search elsewhere in vain for the least trace. That the book alone contained the final consummation, is but an arbitrary supposition. That it was professedly occupied simply with what is reported at the opening of each particular seal, namely, with God's judgments on the enemies of his church, is clear alone from the preparatory vision in ch. iv.—The book, according to many expositors, was publicly presented, "not merely that it might be made publicly known, but also that the things written in it might be executed." At the opening, such expositors remark, there is put forth the performance of this act, the realization of what the book contains. But there is not the least ground to support this notion. The fundamental passages in the Old Testament respecting a shut or sealed book, or prophecy, refer only to its darkness, or the difficulty of understanding it In ver. 3 and 4 the opening of the book is brought into notice only as the condition of the seeing. And merely the insight into the future, not the actual accomplishment of the things belonging to it, could possibly have been represented in the manner here employed. The whole book is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to shew to his

servants, what must shortly come to pass. In it, therefore, what we have to expect is, not the executing, but only the making known of God's decrees.

Ver. 2. *And I saw a strong angel proclaim with a loud voice: Who is worthy to take the book and to break its seals?* The strength does not indicate the angel as one of higher rank (Züllig), which was not required for this purpose; but a strong angel was chosen for it, because of the loud voice, which was to be heard in the heavens above, in the earth, and even under the earth; hence in all regions of being, and also in a powerful manner. Bengel: "The voice of a strong man is heard farther than that of a child; and by the strong angel's voice those, who heard it, would be the more speedily forced to think of their impotence." By Ewald's groundless hypothesis, that the call was not directly addressed to the creatures in the different departments of creation, but to the assembled representatives or angels around God's throne, the strong angel with a loud voice is rendered superfluous.

Ver. 3. *And no one in heaven, nor on the earth, nor under the earth, could take the book and look therein.* The inhabitants of the three kingdoms of creation are, in like manner, united together in Phil. ii. 10, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth;" and also with the same design of showing the subordination of all to Christ; so that it is quite natural to suppose the Seer might have the passage in his eye.—The book contains the decrees of God. To know these one's self, and with perfect clearness and certainty, pre-supposes the closest intimacy with the being of God, from whom these decrees proceed, such as can belong to no created being, but only to Christ, the Word, who was in the beginning with the Father. In perfect agreement with the mode of representation here adopted, in the conviction that all essential knowledge of a religious kind can only be attained through fellowship with Christ, who in this respect also is the one mediator, John says in his Gospel, in ch. i. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." And that this conviction has grown out of the doctrine of Christ, is clear from what the Lord says to Nicodemus in John iii. 11—13:

he alone could give certain intelligence concerning heavenly things, because he sprung from heaven, and is in heaven, and even in his state of humiliation was still, as to his divine nature, in the closest fellowship with God. Likewise Matth. xi. 27, where the Lord says, "All things are committed to me of my Father. And no man knows the Son but the Father, and no man knows the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him;" one of those numerous declarations in the first Gospel, which were quite suited to John's profound vein of thought.

Ver. 4. *And I wept much, that no one was found worthy to take the book, nor to look therein.* The tears of John arose from no such unsatisfied curiosity, as is represented by many of the older interpreters, who kept their eye too much upon the pre-intimation of particular circumstances, which goes hand in hand with the desire to get at the corresponding facts in history. The tears proceeded from the same cause as those of Mary, in John xx. 11, ss., "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him;" and with the grief of the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 21), "But we hoped that it had been he, who should have redeemed Israel; and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done;" to whom the Lord spake, "Oh fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken," and beginning at Moses, and going through all the prophets, he expounded to them what had been written of him in the Scriptures. The whole terrible power of the Roman empire had thrown itself upon the church, and threatened to crush it; comp. ch. xiii. 7, "And it was given to him to war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." John himself, who here represents the church, found himself in solitary banishment. It seemed as if matters were coming to an end with the kingdom of Christ; the present was despaired of; the future was dark; no answer could be found to the anxious question, "What shall be the end thereof?"—The weeping of John implied the weakness of his faith.—Without that he would not have wept at the inability of all creatures to open the seals, but would have turned with joy to Christ. Without it, also, the book of the future, after all that the prophets of

the Old Testament had written, and our Lord had said, would not have been entirely a shut one. It went with him, in regard to his earlier acquired knowledge, precisely as it had done with the disciples in Luke xxiv. He might have said, I have indeed heard the words, but my faith in them has failed. The Lord had taken from him all that he formerly possessed, in order to penetrate him more thoroughly with the conviction, that he had nothing but what was given to him, given to him by Christ alone through undeserved grace, that he might more gloriously experience the power of divine consolation. The Revelation is a book of consolation, but the consolation takes for granted the grief of those who were to receive it.—According to the Apocalypse there is still also to be much weeping Christ must constantly perform to his servants anew, what he here performed for the Seer and the church. Scripture alone cannot do it. It must itself be shut up by Christ, and opened again with living power. The word, "I wept much," can only be understood by those who have lived in great catastrophes of the church, and entered with the fullest sympathy into her sufferings, and thus from their own experience have become acquainted with the heights and the depths of the life of faith. Not a weeping, but only an indifferent weakness of faith, is unbecoming toward a holy God.—"Without tears," says Bengel, "the Revelation was not written, neither can it without tears be understood." Itself the answer to the heartfelt and painful longing of the Seer, it will only be apprehended aright by those who participate in the same longing. Whoever goes to it merely as an interesting production of the apostolic age, he will everywhere stumble in darkness.—Only if we take this view of the weeping shall we get rid of the idea, that detailed disclosures of the future are given in the seven seals; and shall come to regard them as given rather for the more general purpose of inspiring the soul with confidence respecting God's judgments on the world, and the victory of faith.

Ver. 5. *And one of the elders spake to me: Weep not; behold the lion, who is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has overcome to take the book, and to break its seven seals.* The presbyter represents the whole church of the completely righteous. From the testimony yielded by this to Christ, out of rich experience consolation first comes to the fainting Seer, and

a fainting church on earth, and then also from the action of Christ himself. The *overcoming* is taken here by some in the weaker sense of *getting*, or *attaining*.[1] But that the idea of overcoming, of a victory, must be retained, may be inferred even from the designation of Christ as "the lion of the tribe of Judah." For, this is in itself a warlike image; and in the fundamental passages Judah appears as a warrior and a conqueror under the image of a lion. David also was a hero and a conqueror. The comparison also of ver. 9 confirms the view; for there the being slain, etc., corresponds to the conquering here. And, finally, John xvi. 33, and generally the standing use of νικᾷν, conquering, in the writings of John, where it occurs more frequently than in any others, gives farther confirmation. But the conquering cannot be understood here directly of Christ's victory over sin, the devil, and the world. The connection is against this, as the conquering is immediately joined to the opening: he has overcome to open, or in opening.[2] Hence, by the overcoming here can only be meant the overcoming of the difficulties which stood against the opening of the book. For this, it was necessary to tread a long and arduous path, requiring the exercise of gigantic power. An indispensable condition was the victory over sin and Satan, through death and blood. For by this alone was Christ worthy to open the book. The enemies that were first to be conquered, before the book could be opened, are indicated in ver 9. The opening of the book is, therefore, a reward for having finished redemption. So that this victory has that for its foundation of which John has written in his Gospel.—The designation of Christ as "the lion of the tribe of Judah" rests on Gen. xlix. 9. There Judah himself appears as a lion, on account of his warlike and victorious energy. But, according to that word of the dying patriarch, Judah must one day find his culmination in the Messiah. Typically he had once already culminated in David, in whom the lion-nature of the

1 Vitringa: "The Hebrew word זכה, in the later times of the Hebrew commonwealth, was most frequently used in the sense of deserving, being worthy, or being reckoned such; nay, even simply to obtain, to get a province, or an office to be administered.—This suits well here. For the elder wished to signify to John, that there was one who was counted worthy of administering that work, for which John wept that none was equal to."

2 See on the Infi. as used to determine more closely the meaning of a verb, the so-called infin. epexegeticus, Matthiae, § 532, and Winer, § 45.

tribe became strikingly manifest. Ingenious, though not sufficiently grounded, is the opinion of some expositors, that the patriarch Jacob is the elder who said to John, "Weep not," etc.— The second designation of Christ, as "the root of David," is in perfect accordance with the preceding one. In Christ the race of David, as the hero and conqueror, lived anew—that David who boldly said, "By thee can I dash in pieces the warlike people, and by my God I leap over walls. I pursue after mine enemies, and overtake them, and turn not again till I have consumed them" (Ps. xviii.) This might be said with still greater truth by Christ, to whom David himself also there points, in whom he saw the highest perfection of his being and his race; see my Comm. on the Psalm xviii. The root here, and in ch. xxii. 16, where the Lord says, "I am the root of David," marks the *product* of the root, that through which the root makes itself seen, its shoot, as *seed*, is very often used for the product of the seed. This appears by comparing the original passage, Isa. xi. 10, where the Messiah is designated the "root of Jesse" (comp. liii. 2), with ver. 1 of the same chapter, where he is more fully called, "a shoot out of his roots." In what sense the Messiah is named, in Isa. xi. 10, the root of Jesse, as the one in whom the family of David, that had sunk into the lowest condition, again flourished, is rendered manifest by the parallel passages, ch. xi. 1, and liii. 2, where, under the likeness of the shoot of a plant, reference is made to the origin of the Messiah as sprung from a family which had once resembled a proud and stately tree, but now had become one of the lowest. The designation: the root of David, here and in ch. xxii. 16, takes for granted all that is said in the Gospels of the genealogy of Jesus in connection with the house of David, and the humble condition of his parents.

Ver. 6. *And I saw (and lo!) in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as if it had been slain; and it had seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent into all lands.* Vitringa: "What the elder had announced to John is now in fact and reality exhibited to him." The Seer beholds Christ in the midst of the throne, with the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders. The form of expression is Hebraistic; see Ewald's Gr. § 217, q. The meaning is, that Christ stood in the space be-

tween the throne with the four beasts, and the elders. "In the innermost part of the circle," remarks Bengel, "was the throne with the holy creatures (inseparable from it), and in a wider circle were the elders. But the lamb was between, as the Mediator between God and man. The elders are a selection, and represent in a sense the whole of mankind;" more properly, the whole church. Ewald: "In the fittest place which the Messiah could occupy, standing close to God, and elevated far above the elders." —John saw Christ in the form of a *little lamb*. Bengel: "He appeared to John under the aspect of a small tender lamb. Lovely image! What this appears to derogate from the majesty of Christ, is at the beginning once for all ascribed to him under the image of "the lion out of the tribe of Judah." Patience and strength meet in him.—The elder had pointed John to a lion, and yet John beholds only a little lamb. The Lord Jesus is named only once in this prophecy a lion, and this precisely at the beginning before he is called a lamb. Whence it appears that, as often as we think of him as a lamb, we should also regard him as the lion of the tribe of Judah.—He is not called simply a lamb, but properly a little lamb, and this with an especial respect to the elders. The elders are beyond doubt, in part at least, the patriarchs. These, especially the first (?) among them had attained to some, nay many (?) hundred years of age; but the Lord Jesus, on the contrary, was slain in his thirty-third year. Under the Old Testament, lambs were, for the most part, taken when a year old for sacrifice; and the age of the Lord Jesus may be regarded as that of a year-old lamb in respect to those fathers." Reference is also made in ch. xii. 5 to the tender age and the untimely removal of the Saviour. The image of a lamb is found only with John among the Evangelists; and according to him it was first used by the Baptist. He represented Christ to his disciples as the Lamb of God, who was to take away the sins of the world, John i. 29, 36. The contemplation of Christ as the Lamb of God took such hold of the Evangelist, that in ch. xix. 36 he transfers to Christ, without farther remark, what was written in the Old Testament of the Paschal lamb. Even the word little lamb (*ἀρνίον* dimin. from *ἀρήν*, Bock) is common to the Evangelist and the passage before us. It occurs only once besides in the whole of the New Testament, John xxi. 15. That Christ

appears here in the form of a slain lamb, was done out of respect to the occasion: his appearance imaged that through which he had conquered to open the book, his sufferings as the God-man, by which he had made reconciliation. The lamb comes here into consideration primarily as a beast for sacrifice. But of all the beasts used for sacrifice the one was chosen which most fitly represented the glorious properties of Christ, his innocence and righteousness (1 Pet. i. 19), and especially the eminent graces which he manifested under his sufferings, his quiet patience and meekness. Comp. the fundamental passage Isa. liii. 7, according to which the servant of God is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep that is dumb before the shearers, and opening not his mouth, Acts viii. 32. The prophet sees the lamb standing as if it were slain. Bengel: "This lamb was now no more dead, but living, and yet stood so that one could see it had once been slain. The marks appeared of the slaughter, comp. i. 7. Just because the lamb had been slain, was it worthy to open the book (Phil. ii. 8, 9), and that for the joy of his people, for the terror of his enemies. Our Lord Jesus, after his resurrection, had still on his hands and feet the wounds he had received in his crucifixion, and the opening that had been made in his side by the spear was still such that Thomas could put his hand into it. It is a matter of renown rather than otherwise for a warrior to have his body marked with wounds and scars. So it is a great glory to the Lord Jesus that he shows himself as a slain lamb; and to those who follow him it is a perpetual admonition to them to do what he has done for them. The lamb was slain, Luther translates, erwürget (choked), an expression he also uses frequently for such as had perished by the sword. The word *slain*, however, is much better, and agrees both with the kind of death Christ underwent, and with his designation as a lamb. To be choked or strangled implies that the blood remains in the suffocated body; while by slaying, the blood was separated from the body; and when the Jews killed their sacrifices, the bodies were drained of their blood."—The lamb has *seven horns* and *seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God*. The latter clause, beginning with οἵ εἰσι, whether viewed grammatically or in regard to the sense, can only be referred to the eyes, but not to the horns. As the lion precedes the lamb, so here again allusion is made to the entire fulness of divine power and strength with

which Christ is furnished for the destruction of his enemies and for the deliverance of his people. The horns are a standing symbol in the Old Testament for victorious power—comp. Ps. cxlviii. 14, and the passages there referred to in my Commentary. The number of the horns being seven, shows that this strength was combined in him with the greatest fulness. On the eyes as a symbol of the powers of God put forth in creation, see on ch. iv. 6. The reference of the eyes to his wisdom or omniscience tears this passage asunder from that, and from the fundamental passages of the Old Testament, and is also disproved by the declaration: which are the seven Spirits of God; for the Spirits of God cannot possibly be limited to wisdom and omniscience. That the lamb has the seven Spirits of God (comp. ch. i. 4, where these Spirits are represented as the medium through which God gives grace and peace; and ch. iii. 1, where the Saviour is said to have the seven Spirits of God, as well as the seven stars), has respect to this, that the Spirit of the Father is also the Spirit of the Son; that all divine powers stand in him; that he is furnished with the whole plenitude of divine omnipotence. Bengel: "This Spirit is also the Son's Spirit, of whose divine glory we have even here a strong testimony, for our joy and assurance of our faith in him. It has been already shown, that the naming of the seven Spirits of God does not refer to the nature of the Spirit of God. For in that respect there is but one Spirit, as is expressly said in Eph. iv. 4; and therefore the seven point to gifts and operations. Here, therefore, we are told that all power in heaven and on earth is given to Christ, as he testified himself before ascending to heaven. As he also said before his return: All that the Father hath is mine; so it can in particular be said, that the seven Spirits of God, namely, of our Heavenly Father, are also the eyes of the Lamb. The Spirit of the Father is also the Spirit of the Son; and this manifests the divine glory of our dear Redeemer."—The seven Spirits are described as being sent over all the earth. On this Bengel remarks: "The seven Spirits are frequently mentioned, but this is the only passage where such a message is ascribed to them." This notification, resting on Zech. iv. 10, puts it out of doubt that it is not the spirit of God in himself that is here discoursed of, not that Spirit in the oneness of his being, but in the multifariousness of his operations. It forms a mighty bulwark against

despair in the church on account of the threatening power of the world. Should even the whole earth rise against her, Christ, her head, has the seven Spirits of God, that are sent over the whole earth, and whose secret, often deeply concealed, yet irresistible influence, nothing on the earth can resist, however loftily it may exalt itself.

Ver. 7. *And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne.* The secrets of the future could never in themselves be concealed from him, who has the seven Spirits of God. The Word, who in the begining was with God, has part in everything that is God's. He did not need to acquire through blood and death an insight into the secrets of God; not as the lamb that was slain did he first receive it. But here another point is under consideration, the communication of that knowledge of God's secrets to the church, and the awakening of a joyful confidence in her eternal continuance, in spite of all the persecutions that may threaten her destruction. The lamb takes the book out of the right hand of him that sits upon the throne, to open it and impart its contents to his servant John, and through him to the whole church. But all these hang on the atonement effected by Christ, this is the foundation of every gift and endowment conferred on the church of the New Testament. The Spirit, who among other things imparts to the church whatever insight she has into the future, and dispels the mists that envelope it, was first poured down after Christ had ascended to the right hand of the Father. In John vii. 39, it is said, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Further, in ch. xvi., "Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away. For if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you. But when he, the Sprit of truth is come, he will lead you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but what he hears that will he speak, and *he will show you things to come.*" The proof can still be made every day. Only if any one is truly in Christ, and, in so far as he is so, he has a clear look into the future. And so John, who represented the fainting church of his time, being for the moment not in Christ, was

so oppressed by the heavy burden of sufferings and persecutions, that he wept as if no one were able to open the book.

Ver. 8. *And when he took the book, the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb; having every one harps and golden vials full of incense, which are the prayers of saints.* Bengel: "Hereupon were heard many and various songs of praise, by the description of which the narrative of the taking of the book and the opening of the seals is interrupted. These songs of praise, of which this chapter is full, proceeded along with that, which the Lamb did with the book. As we have then to note it as a leading point, that in this prophecy two things are written that were done simultaneously, so the one is divided, the one half being written first and the other last, while that which took place at the same time is put in the middle. Here now, in such wise, along with that which the lamb did, when he took the book and opened the seals, proceeds the heavenly music." But that the songs of praise and the opening of the seals went on together, is not once indicated here, and there is no collateral reason for supposing it to have taken place. The order therefore should rather be: first the taking of the book, then the solemn ascription of praise, finally the opening. It has been thought extraordinary that the four beasts should here fall down. Züllig sees in this a confirmation of one of his untenable hypotheses, "We have remarked above, that in the Apocalypse the Cherubim do not, as in Ezekiel, themselves bear the throne, but only as mutes (!) stand around it. That such was actually the case, is perfectly obvious here, since otherwise they could not have fallen down without the throne also falling." But the falling down of the beasts will lose its extraordinary aspect, if it is considered that the Cherubim never in the proper sense *bear* the throne, not even in Ezekiel: how could they in that case fly with it? That the throne moves above them so as to admit of its being said in a certain way to be borne by them, only images the truth, that the Lord is the absolute ruler of the earthly creation. The words: and having every one, &c., refer immediately to the elders only, not to the Cherubim. For the harps, human instruments, are found elsewhere in the Apocalypse only in the hands of members of the church (comp. ch. xiv. 2, 3,

xv. 2); the golden vials full of incense, which are the prayers of saints, are only suitable in the hands of the heavenly representatives of the church; a celebration of the deeds of Christ so copious is nowhere else found in the mouths of the Cherubim, and does not appear to suit them, rather indeed opposes their nature and signification, and their own peculiar song of praise is addressed only to God as the almighty Creator, iv. 8; finally, all doubt is taken away by the words in ver. 9, "Thou hast redeemed us, &c.," which are not suitable in the mouth of the beasts, and oblige those, who defend their participation in the songs of praise, to resort to a change in the text. But, on the other hand, we must not exclude the four beasts from any participation in what follows, after their being said to fall down, along with the elders, before the lamb. Though the falling down does not justify us in supposing, with many expositors, that the Cherubim had a full participation with the elders, yet a sort of counterpoise might have been given in what follows, by its being expressly remarked that the elders alone had part in it. Farther, a merely dumb prostration, where all besides, not excepting the angels, sing praise, appears unsatisfactory. The natural supposition is, that the elders came forth as the speakers of the chorus, which was formed of them and the four beasts. Both are connected together by an internal bond. The elders represent the church, which is redeemed from the earth, "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." They are the bloom of the earthly creatures represented by the Cherubim, specially of the human race. So that both the two is natural—that the Cherubim should have also come forth, and that they should have allowed the elders to speak, who were more immediately partakers of the grace bestowed on the earthly creatures, the human race. The benefit respects primarily the earth, and more especially the church. Hence the four beasts and the elders come forth first, before the angels, with their song of adoration and praise. The elders have each harps and golden vials full of frankincense, the prayers of saints. The difficulty has here been raised: "The instrument-player, who requires both hands for the purpose, could not at the same time hold the vessel of incense." And to solve it the elders have been supposed to hold the harps and the vials alternately in their hands, or else to have given the vials to the Cherubim. But

all such questions are out of place in the Apocalypse. We have to do in it, not with gross material forms, but with airy images, circumstances of a light and etherial nature. The gently indicated vials float softly on the hands, as do also the harps. The harps and the golden vials full of incense go together. The harps accompany the new songs, the prayers proceed on this, that occasion had been given to them. Even till now the church has in the one hand a harp, and in the other a vial. Without vials no harps. Without prayer no occasion for thanks. Without harps no vials. Only where one can pray, can one also give thanks. The harps here take precedence, because the subject has mainly to do with adoration and praise, because the new song, mentioned in ver. 9, must be accompanied with the harp.—Smoking sweet-smelling frankincense is in Scripture the common symbol of believing prayer, which is precious in God's sight; comp. Ps. cxli. 2, "Let my prayer be acceptable before thee as the incense-offering;" Ez. viii. 11: "every one his censer in his hand, and the prayer of the cloud of incense went up," Rev. viii. 3; Luke i. 10; also my Beitr. Th. III, p. 645.—The words: which are the prayers of saints, can be grammatically referred only to the vials, not as Vitringa thinks, to the incense. But the vials are brought into notice in connection with their use.—*Prayer* is here, not prayer in the most general sense, but supplicatory prayer, תפלה. The great object of the prayers of the saints, is, according to the historical starting-point of the book and the parallel-passage, ch. viii. 3, 4, the support of the church in the midst of persecution, its completion, and the execution of judgment upon the enemies; comp. ch. vi. 10, xi. 18, xviii. 20. In the time of the Revelation this was the business which engaged all minds. The cry: "Hear the prayer of our distress, went incessantly up.—By the saints are primarily to be understood the saints on earth—comp. ch. xiii. 7, 10—who sighed under the hardships of persecution, and were members of the militant church. Still, there is no reason for excluding the saints in glory—comp. ch. xi. 18, xviii. 20. These look down upon the sufferings and conflicts of their brethren, who are still in the flesh, and entreat God to accomplish their redemption and perfect his church. Bengel: "Whether the saints were those in heaven or those on earth, is not specified. The text makes no

distinction, and we also make none. The saints in both regions are brethren. The saints in heaven are now entirely without sin, and if the saints on earth are still in this miserable tabernacle, they yet have forgiveness of sin, and so are accepted before God as well as the others. Now, prayer rises as a precious incense. It gives a sweet savour before God, and draws great power along with it."—The elders as representatives of the church only present their prayers before Christ. Bengel: "The elders are not mediators; for there is but one God and one Mediator between God and man, here as also the Lamb, that had been slain, is himself worshipped by the elders as Mediator." They fall down with the Cherubim before the Lamb, extol him by their songs on their harps, direct to him their prayers for redemption: all a proof of the true and essential Godhead of him, to whom has been given a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee might bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

Ver. 9. *And they sing a new song, saying: Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open its seals; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.* Ver. 10. *And hast made us kings and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.* The elders sing a *new song*. Bengel: "new work, new song, Isa. xlii. 9, 10, xliii. 18, 19; and in the Psalms once and again (Ps. xxxiii. 3, xl. 4, xcvi. 1, xcviii. 1.) So also Rev. xiv. 3." The subject of the new song is not the blessing of redemption already old, but the opening of the book, the new act of grace, which has been bestowed on the church for the revivification of her hope and confidence, at a time when her way was hedged in, and her right appeared to have been forgotten by her God, when she bitterly wept because no one could open the book and break its seals.—The elders say: Thou art worthy (and able) to open the book and break its seals, because thou wast slain and hast redeemed us. They speak in the name of the church which they represent—comp. the *they* in the next verse, where the change intentionally points to this, that the elders appear not as individuals, but as representatives of the church; and also ch. i. 6. The reading *αὐτούς, them*, for *ἡμᾶς, us*, corresponds to the *ἡμᾶς, us*, and the *βασιλεύσομεν, we shall reign*, in the following

verse. It has been thought, either that the *us* here must be conformed to the *them* there, or that the *they* in the next verse: they shall reign, must be conformed to the us here, because the relation of the elders to the church was not perceived. —The *kindreds*, *tongues*, and *peoples*, point to the tables in Gen. x.—comp. there ver. 5, 20, 31, 32. This shows that the spiritual territory is co-extensive with the natural one, excludes all partiality, marks the œcumenical character of the work of Christ, and of the church of Christ, in contrast to the kingdom of God under the Old Testament. In the same direction points also the number *four*, which was also intentionally used by Moses in Gen. x.—comp. ver. 5, 20, 31, being the signature of the earth.[1] That by the kindreds we are not, with Bengel, to understand the tribes of Israel, is clear by comparing Gen. x. 5, 18, xii. 3 in the Sept. translation. The tone of the Revelation is one so thoroughly œcumenical, that so much of a special respect to the Jews would be quite unsuitable to its character. On ver. 10 Bengel remarks: "They do not say: Thou hast made us thereto, and we shall reign, although they themselves must be understood in what is said. Thou hast made *them*, namely the redeemed, a kingdom and priests by virtue of this very redemption." Bengel preferred the reading, a *kingdom*, to that of *kings*, on the ground that it was unseemly for those, who were in the presence of the great King, to call themselves kings, as they also cast their crowns before him. But the reading: kings, is best supported, and there are no internal considerations against it: they confess here also that they hold their crowns only in fief; they wonder that Christ has conferred such honour on such persons, with the same humility that David praises the grace of God, in Ps. viii., in granting royal dignity to his poor creature, man. But if the elders, as representatives of the church, in ch. iv. 4, bear golden crowns on their heads, Christians might here also be called kings. We may compare also the diversity in the two readings at ch. i. 6.—Züllig remarks on *kings* falsely: such as shall one day be such, comp. on ch. i. 6. We must rather ex-

1 Bengel compares viii. 9, xi. 9, xiii. 7, xiv. 6, x. 11, xvii. 15, and remarks: In these passages *tongues*, *nations*, *peoples*, are always mentioned; but in place of φυλῶν, ὄχλοι once, *kings* once. The number *four* is therefore always preserved, having respect to the four quarters of the earth.

plain: kings even now, but kings still more gloriously in the future, when the meek shall inherit the earth. The kingdom of the saints has its stages, as that of the Lord, comp. ch. xi. 17.—That the words: and they shall reign, follows the designation *priests*, shews, that the priestly and the royal dignity are most closely conjoined together; on the spiritual territory he who is priest is also king; nearness of relationship to God has dominion in God over all that is out of God as its necessary consequence.—On the words: they shall reign, Vitringa remarks: "If we take into account the feeble beginnings of Christianity, and the circumstances of the times, this must have appeared quite incredible and beyond all hope. The saints, however, taught by the Word of God, anticipated with their hope that great revolution of things, which at last began to take effect under Constantine, and sought especially to learn this out of the book before us."—The fundamental passage is in Dan. vii. 27, "And the kingdom, and the dominion, and the power over the kingdoms under the whole heaven is given to the people of the saints of the Most High." We can either explain: they shall reign *over* the earth, by comparing ch. ii. 26, Matt. ii. 22; or: *on* the earth. Even if we follow the latter meaning, according to ver. 13, we need not exclude ch. xx. 6, according to which the already completed number of the saints shall reign in heaven with Christ for a thousand years. For its being said to be on the earth does not necessarily require the seat of the kingdom to be on the earth; this only is implied, that the earth is the sphere of their government, their domain. But ch. xxii. 5 points to the final consummation.

Ver. 11. *And I saw, and heard a voice of many angels round about the throne, and about the beasts and the elders, and their number was ten thousand of ten thousands and thousands of thousands.* Bengel: "The many angels make a circle; this circle surrounds the throne, and the beasts, and the elders. The holy beasts are like a part of the throne itself, although they are no carved inanimate figures, but living. The elders, however, are nearer the throne than the angels. It is a question, on account of the comparison between angels and men, which form of the two orders of creation is the more excellent in its nature. The angels, because they are spirits, so far agree more with the nature of God than ours. But because the Son of

God has become man, men also have an honour which the angels have not; and one might almost say, that an angel might wish to be a man, so that he might be like the Son of God in his humanity. There can be no doubt, then, that there is at least somewhat of man nearer to God than the angels." But the elders here are nearer to the throne, *because the matter in hand concerns the church on earth.* The question of rank, therefore, has nothing to do here. But that the angels encompass not merely the throne of God with the beasts, but also the elders on every side, arises from this, that they are the servants, not merely of God, but also of the church, or God's servants for the good of the kingdom of his annointed upon earth—comp. Ps. xxxiv. 8; John i. 52; Heb. i. 14.—The original passage is Dan. vii. 10, "Thousand of thousands served him, and myriads of myriads stood before him."—That here the thousands stand after the ten thousands, while we would have expected the opposite order, is to be explained from the consideration, that in enormous multitudes distinctions vanish. Bengel's supposition, that the smaller numbers being added to the greater is a proof that the former must be taken exactly, is quite too little! After the myriads stand also the thousands in Ps. lxviii. 18, where in like manner reference is made to the angelic hosts as agents in the administration of God's kingdom on earth.

Ver. 12. *And they speak with a loud voice: The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* We must supply: and so to open the book. For, it is in regard to the opening of the book, that the praise of Christ is here celebrated. Bengel: "In ver. 9 it is said: Thou art worthy, and now: The Lamb is worthy. And so again in ver. 13. The songs more immediately belong to the Lamb." Here, the mode of representation is more an objective one, there the direct address carries more of feeling. The encomiums mentioned are *seven*, corresponding to the same number of God in ch. vii. 12, and the ten number of encomiums in regard to God in 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12.[1] Bengel:

[1] Vitringa: "The formula approaches nearest to that used by David in 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12, where he publicly praised God before an assembly of the Israelites. Which is itself a proof, that the personage, whose praise is celebrated here, is not merely illustrious, but a partaker of true Godhead." Schöttgen: "But those who are unwilling to concede

"We should pronounce these seven encomiums as if they were but one word, because they all stand together under a single article." The Lamb is worthy to *take* or receive the power, etc., they ascribe to him, in the acknowledgment and celebration of it—comp. on ch. iv. 9.—Mention is made also in Eph. iii. 8 of "the unsearchable riches" of Christ. On account of these riches he possesses glorious gifts, which are discoursed of in ver. 9 and 10, and can impart them to our poverty. Comp. John i. 16, 17, "And of his fulness have we all received grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."—The *blessing* denotes in an objective sense manifold blessings, for example Rom. xv. 29, where the blessing of the gospel is spoken of. But that it is used here in the sense of an encomium, appears from the corresponding *thanks* in ch. iv. 9, and the connection in which it stands with the thanksgiving in ch. vii. 12. The word is intentionally placed here at the end, and in ver. 13 at the commencement of the whole enumeration. It points to this, in what sense the power, etc., are taken, in the acknowledgment.

Ver. 13. *And every creature, that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, and what is in them, heard I all saying: To him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing, and honour, and glory, and power for ever and ever.* Züllig, following Bossuet, says, "In ch. iv. there were two songs in honour of Jehovah, in ch. v. two also in honour of the Lamb; and this concluding song of all creatures has respect to both together, therefore combines both adorations into one, and accordingly rounds off the whole scene. The praise itself is of four parts, so that it possesses a doxological roundness of parts, and just the four, indeed, of the universe that here speaks."—The original passage is Ps. cxlviii. There everything in heaven and earth that bears traces of God's glory, is summoned to praise him. It begins in heaven with the angels, and through the intermediate region of the stars passes to the clouds. The lifeless there praise God by their simple being, as also in Ps. ciii. 21,

divine properties to Christ's human nature, can be most easily refuted from this passage. For, Sephiroth, or properties, which belong only to God, which neither the Jews nor any of the sacred writers ever ascribe to any but God, are here ascribed to the Lamb, which without doubt is Christ."

xix. 1, the proclamation of God's glory is attributed to the stars, as being a matter-of-fact celebration of it. From these analogies the praise of the Lamb can here also be ascribed to all the different parts and orders of creation, only in so far as he participated in the creation of the world. It is thus in unison with John i. 3, "All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made that is made;" ver. 10, "The world was made by him;" comp. John xvii. 5, "And now, O Father, glorify me with thyself, with that glory, which I had with thee before the world was;" also 1 John i. 1, and Hebr. i. 2, "By whom also he made the worlds," ver. 3, "He upholds all things by his mighty word," Col. i. 15—17. In this book itself Christ appears as the first and the last, i. 17, the beginning of the creation of God, iii. 14. Those, who will not accede to this view, according to which even those under the earth, the devil and the lost must praise Christ —for their existence and the gifts with which they are furnished, are a speaking proof of his greatness and love—have only to resort to a poetical figure without any profound substantial meaning.[1] Here there is no more mention of the opening of the book, but the whole scene runs out into the general praise of God and the Lamb. Bengel: "There are many creatures on the earth, many in the sea, rational and irrational, blessed and cursed. Each has its proper dwelling and abode. And now all, that are in the four great regions, are summoned together, even though they should be in hell. All must honour the Son, as they honour the Father. The great regions are four, and the encomiums are also four." The addition: and is in them, points to this, that we are not to think merely of the great parts of creation—for example of the earth in its mountains and valleys, but also in its smaller things, which have their abode in it.—The *all*, πάντας, not everything,[2] is used on account of the personification. The *blessing*, which ends ver. 12, forms the beginning here.

1 De Wette's remark, too light for a solemn subject, "To him upon the throne and to the Lamb—therefore no Trinitarian representation," is disposed of by what has been said. The apparent separation of the sitter on the throne and of the Lamb is by John himself again resolved into unity, when in ch. vii. 17 he speaks of the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

2 Bengel in his Apparatus: "The reading καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς, πάντας ἤκουσα λέγοντας, is supported by the greater number of codices. A few turn πάντας, or even λέγοντας, into the neuter."

Ver. 14. *And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped.* Bengel: "This *Amen* was said by them to all that was contained in the adoration of the whole creation. They took it up, affirmed it to be good, expressed their satisfaction with it, and so it went back again from the outermost circle to the throne. Within the circle the four holy beasts and the elders had begun the celebration of praise, from them it went forth, came to the circle which was formed by the multitude of angels, and then to all creation. And now when the whole has ceased, the four holy beasts say, Amen; that is, Let it be so, it should and it shall be so to all eternity." —The saying of Amen and worshipping is the inferior position. Vitringa: "In the temple and the synagogue it was customary in public services for the whole assembly to say *Amen* to the prayers and the doxologies, which were read by the priests, or the minister of the synagogue. This custom passed over from the synagogue to the church, and remained there for a long time; comp. 1 Cor. xiv. 16, and the second Apology of Justin Martyr, p. 98, where it is said, 'And the president, according to his ability, pours out prayers and thanksgivings, and the people respond, saying Amen.'" This humble position the four beasts and the elders could not occupy generally and from the first, but only after the chief business, in which they played the first part, had been already finished. When those had come forth, who stood in the most general relation to God and the Lamb, and performed also their part, then the four beasts and the elders took up the subordinate position of respondents. The concluding theme of praise returns back to the fundamental fact, the creation, upon which every other rests, and with the celebration of which a beginning was made in ch. iv. Here too those, who in the adoration of ver. 8—12 had to remain silent, could take a part. The response of the four beasts to their song of praise is first mentioned, because they are the representatives of an important part of creation, the living creatures upon earth. In ver. 8 they had stood along with the elders, because the living earthly creation represented by them is the natural basis of the church; here they respond to the acclaim of the whole creation. The addition: him who lives for ever and ever, which is found in Luther, has but a very feeble support from the codices, and has been derived from

ch. iv. 9, 10, without attending to the essential difference between this passage and that. There the praise is ascribed to the Father alone, here it is ascribed to him that sits on the throne *and the Lamb;* so that such an addition would be unsuitable. (So already Bengel in his Apparatus.)

Chap. vi. Bengel in his "Erbaulichen Reden" gives utterance to a sentiment, which is of importance for judging in regard to the *historizing* mode of interpreting the Revelation adopted by him in common with many others: "Thus far we have considered five chapters, and have not met with much of human history, although it was the substance and design of the book to shew what was to come to pass. But now such things come. And from the quality of the persons here present, it is not possible to say much respecting them." Bengel thus felt that the Revelation, in respect to its main subject, could not through his exposition be enjoyed by the vast majority of Christians, and remained dark in spite of all disclosures. This should have led him to subject that mode of interpretation to a severe ordeal. For, it is scarcely at the outset to be imagined, that a book, which is so decidedly ecclesiastical in its contents, should have been intended for the narrow circle of the learned. And if we consider more closely, it would not thus be really fitted to serve the interests and necessities of that class. For what renders a book unintelligible to the unlettered Christian, also renders it unedifying to the learned.[1] Even the resourses and rare unction of a Bengel have not succeeded in preventing many parts of his exposition from being no farther edifying, than as an antiquated compend of universal history.

Ver. 1. *And I saw that*[2] *the Lamb opened one of the seven seals. And I heard one of the four beasts say as with a voice*

1 There are not wanting expressions in Bengel which show that he himself felt this; as at ch. ix. 1, ss., "The preceding context might indeed be regarded, as if little edification was contained in it for us, since a woe is therein described, which is already long since past," &c.

2 It is properly: And I saw when, that is, I was a beholder when. It is better to explain thus than with several: And I beheld, when the Lamb had opened one of the seven seals, then I heard. The hearing can certainly be comprehended under the seeing, in a more general sense. But where, as here, there is *merely* something to be heard, and nothing properly to be seen, the: I saw, could scarcely be so employed. But the opening of the first seal was of itself, and apart from its contents, of such moment, that it was proper for the Seer to say in regard to it, that he saw.

of thunder: Come and see. Bengel: "The four first seals have apparently a special resemblance to each other and a close connection, as have also the three last. In the four first the four sacred beasts exclaim after each other to John: Come; and on each occasion John saw a horse of a certain colour, and a certain power that either belonged, or was now given to him that sat on it. But in the three last seals the four sacred beasts are not mentioned, and neither is there any horse."—Expositors for the most part remark, that *one* of the four beasts may be as much as the *first*, and that this, according to ch. iv. 7, may be the lion. But in harmony with only one of the four beasts and not the first being here named, is the circumstance, that there is no evidence whatever of the particular beasts being taken into account.—But why generally should such appearances of the beasts have been announced? The answer is: because they are the representatives of the earth, on which the judgments were to be inflicted, or rather of all living beings on the earth. To the same conclusion points also the expression *in* ver. 6: in the midst of the four beasts.—The words: *as with a voice of thunder*, are used only of the first in the series, and as to the meaning also appear to belong only to this. For, this distinction corresponds with the surpassing elevation of the object. With a voice of thunder was he announced, whose voice, according to ch. i. 15, "is like a voice of many waters," of whom it is said in ch. x. 3, "And he cried with a loud voice as a lion roars, and when he cried the seven thunders uttered their voices." The voice of thunder is a suitable announcement of the God-man conqueror, who, with invincible might, carries everything before him. Especially in the third of the series the thunders would have been unsuitable. They are elsewhere found also only in connection with the greatest transactions.—The second thing peculiar to the preparation for the first appearance is the "Come and *see*" (in the following seals, it is merely: Come), which is spoken here to John as the representative of the whole church, which must be instructed through him regarding future events. This also points to the higher dignity of the first appearance, to the "great sight" (Ex. iii.3; Acts vii. 31), which was presented in it. Bengel falsely: "This word *see* is put only at the first seal and its *joyful contents*. In the three following seals it is merely said *come*. They are of mournful im-

port." In this respect there is no difference between the first seal and the others, according to the right exposition. *The appearances are all joyful for the church, all terrible for the world.*—There exists here a wonderfully close resemblance between the Revelation and Gospel of John. The "come and see," which rests as to its ground on Ps. lxvi. 5, "come and see the deeds of God," and often occurs in the Talmudic and Cabbalistic books as an invitation to the attentive consideration of some important matter (see Schöttgen) is found also in John's Gospel with reference to Christ. According to ch. i. 40 the "come and see" was the second word which was heard from Jesus by John along with his companion Andrew (see the proof for John's being the unnamed disciple of the Baptist, who on his testimony followed Jesus with Andrew, in Lampe Proleg. i. c. 2, § 2.) That word had indelibly impressed itself on the thoughtful mind of the apostle. Through him probably had it come to Philip, and here it is once more sounded forth again.

Ver. 2. *And I saw, and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given him, and he drew out conquering, and that he might conquer.* Bengel remarks: "Much such another, one quite peculiar and incomparable rider upon a white horse, is to be seen in ch. xix. 11; but this one in the first seal had to be exhibited in some proportion with the riders in the second, third, and fourth seals, that there might be only some distinguishing traits in him as compared with the others." The desired "proportion" must, no doubt, be found, but there is no proof of its needing to stand in the circumstances indicated by Bengel. Even if we understand by the rider on the white horse here, in accordance with ch. xix. 11, Christ, there still exists between this seal and the others both a formal agreement and a matter-of-fact one also, in so far as the appearance here, as well as the others, threatens destruction to the antichristian world, and brings it. This essential and indispensable point of unity is entirely left out of view by Bengel. According

1 The want of the καὶ ἴδε in several important manuscripts, which has led some recent critics to omit them in the text, has no weight. For, we can perceive the reason of the omission to be, that in other codices the words are *added* at the second, third, and fourth seals. People sought in various ways to bring the seals into agreement with each other. For the originality of the καὶ ἴδε there is the parallel mark of distinction in the first seal of the voice of thunder, and the agreement with John i. 47.

to him it was the appearance of the reign of Trajan that was represented, and so the church, instead of getting an answer to her anxious and sorrowful question, "Lord, how long?" gets only a bald proof of the omniscience of God: "Trajan's reign could have been guessed by no human sagacity, and yet the things which were to take place under it shortly after the vision of John in Patmos, were so clearly announced beforehand." That by such an interpretation the connection is quite broken between this appearance and what follows in the other seals, is clear as day. But for the identity of the rider on the white horse here with that in ch. xix. 11, "And I saw the heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him is called true and faithful, and he judges and makes war in righteousness," there are the following reasons. 1. The agreement with ch. xix. 11 is of the greater moment as the *end* of Christ's war and victory there corresponds with the *beginning* here. 2. That the rider here is no other than Christ is clear from the unmistakeable reference of this passage to the Messianic Ps. xlv., which is distinctly referred to Christ in Heb. i. 8. The royal dignity, the sitting upon a horse, the bearing of a bow, the going forth to fight, the fulness of victory, all, excepting only the white colour of the horse, presents itself there again. 3. The original passage for the whole first four seals is Zech. ch. i. 7—17 (where see the Christology.) The starting-point there, too, is the prosperity of the world, the distress of the church; and the subject is the announcement of the impending judgment on the world. That judgment the prophet there also incorporates under an equestrian figure. He sees a proud rider on a red horse in the myrtle bush of a deep valley, surrounded by red, bay, and white horses. He recognises in the rider at the head the angel of the Lord, and in his attendants the angels that serve him. In that portraiture also the angel of the Lord, the Logos, appears at the head. 4. Only if Christ here appears at the head will the design and import of the following appearances become clear. They then present themselves as means for accomplishing the victory of Christ, which they must necessarily be from the starting-point of the whole book and from the connection of the introductory chapters, in which everything serves as a preparation for an exhibition of the victory of Christ over the world. In the second, third, and fourth

horses by themselves there is only a fact set forth which can be contemplated from several points of view. We take the right one only when we refer ver. 2 to Christ. In Zechariah also the signification of the symbol would have been doubtful if the angel of the Lord had not been at the head, whose appearance as such announced the salvation of the church, the destruction of the world.—Comp. John xvii. 9. 5. The difference, along with the agreement, between the first appearance and those that follow, discovers itself in the "voice of thunder," the "Come and see," and "there went out another horse," in ver. 4, which is said in respect to the second horse only from its relation to the first, and must, therefore, point to a diversity. 6. The crown is not the victor's crown, but the badge of royal dignity. This shows that the first rider cannot, according to Züllig's opinion, be like the rest, "a plague-spirit," and points to Christ, who, according to ch. xix. 16, has a name written upon his garments and upon his thigh: "King of kings and Lord of lords." That the discourse here cannot be of a victor's crown is evident alone from the consideration that he receives it *before* he goes out to fight, and in ch. xiv. 14 also he appears having a golden crown on his head.—The *white*, λευκός, luceo, to enlighten, shine, is throughout the Revelation the colour of lucid splendour, the symbolical image of glory.—Comp. on ch. iv. 4, and hence the prevailing colour in the appearances of Christ; comp. ch. i. 14, "But his head and his hair white as wool." The white horse has respect to the glory at once of his person and of his operations. Vitringa distinguishes unnecessarily between things that are most essentially limited. That the latter could not be excluded is plain from the analogy of the other horses, the colours of which foreshadow what was to be done by the riders, as also from the analogy of the horses in Zechariah in the passage already referred to, and in ch. vi. 1—8. —The crown is *given* to the rider, materially, that he may bear it in his warlike and victorious march. The king wears the royal crown only when he is engaged in kingly actions.—We must not interpret: conquering and *so that* he conquered; but only: *conquering* and that he *might conquer*. Victory and nothing but victory! The expression: and that he might conquer, is a substitute for the annexed infinitive absol. in Hebr., which "describes vividly unceasing progress." Ewald, § 280, b. It might also

have stood: conquering and conquering, or, so that he conquered and conquered.—The object of the victory can only be the world as hostile to Christ. Viewed in regard to it, the affirmation, "This is no image of terror but of joy," must be changed into the opposite. We must not, also, determine the relation of this horse to the following ones, so as to imply that this brings victory and these three misfortune. The description of a court of judgment opens the whole group. The book with the seven seals is the book of the judgment which God suspends over an ungodly world for the deliverance of his people. This character of it must necessarily come out to view in the first vision. Then in support of this view is the analogy of ch. xix. 11, where also the appearance of him who sits upon the white horse is terrible and appalling to the enemies. Finally, if we were to regard this first appearance as one altogether cheering and joyful, we must destroy its connection with the three following, and overlook the fact that the three last riders form the sequel to the first, are the instruments of his victory.' (Bossuet: "In his train march the three scourges of the wrath of God, as they were presented to David, 2 Sam. xxiv. 13, war, famine, and pestilence.") Behind the punishment there is salvation also for the world, if they submit to the punishment, and the case referred to in ch. ix. 20, and xvi. 11, does not enter, of salvation being hid. *The book is primarily a book of consolation for the church. This in all its feebleness and tribulation shall be revived by having the image of its heavenly King placed before its eyes, as he goes forth with invincible might to win a sure and glorious victory.*

Ver. 3. *And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say: Come.*[1] Ver. 4. *And there went forth*[2] *another horse, which was red, and it was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; and there was given him a great sword.* The supposition of Vitringa, that here the rage of the heathen emperor against

1 The words: and see, which Luther here, and in ver. 5 and 7, has added, have no critical support of any importance, and are taken from ver. 1, without regard to the difference between the first appearance and the others.

1 Several expositors: and there drew out, with reference to the ἐξῆλθε in ver. 2. But we can scarcely say of a horse what can be said of a rider. We must, therefore, understand the word here of the going forth, the in scenam prodire, as opposed to its being hitherto enclosed in the sealed book.

the innocent confessors of the truth, with their bloody martyrdom, is here represented, proceeds on an entire disregard of the connection. *Here*, in the contemplated judgments, which under the leadership of Christ, God suspends over the world, as opposed to Christ and his church, war takes only a subordinate place. The seven trumpets are occupied fully and at large with this. But the object of the passage before us, is a threatening of bloody discord; it is one of the chief punishments which alight upon an ungodly world; one of the chief means of Christ's victory. It breaks the might, the confidence, the security, the arrogance and fury of the antichristian world; it disposes the princes of the world to peace. Therefore the Christian should not be frightened if he sees this judgment realizing itself anew and still proceeding. It should be to him a harbinger of the victory of his Lord. When wars and terrors overspread the earth, he should see in them the dawn of the church's triumph.—On *red* as the colour of blood, see on ch. xii. 3. To this view the whole points, and in particular the words: there was given him a great sword; so that Hoffmann's remark: it means shedding of blood and *burning*, is to be rejected. Only such a colour is here naturally indicated as agrees with the natural colour of the horse. The redness of the fox-coloured horse suffices for the representation of blood redness.

Ver. 5. *And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say: Come. And I saw, and behold a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a pair of balances in his hand.* Ver. 6. *And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say: A measure of wheat for a denarius, and three measures of barley for a denarius; and do not hurt the oil and the wine.* The blackness of the horse indicates, not as Bengel and others suppose, "black hunger as the Greek and Latin poets called it;" but it is employed simply as the colour of mourning. This appears from the analogy of the black horse in Zechariah, ch. vi. It appears also from the fact that it is not hunger which is discoursed of, but only *scarcity*. This judgment forms only the stepping-stone to the fourth, where hunger in the proper sense enters, in fulfilment of Matt. xxiv. 7. The balances are mentioned here only as a symbol of scarcity. For, according to what follows, the corn is not weighed but measured. "Where there is a superfluity, there people count and miss not (Gen. xli. 49), but where

they weigh anything, it is a sign there is not too much." Original passages are Ez. iv. 10, "And thy food which thou shalt eat (thou must eat) by weight, twenty shekels a day," and ver. 16, "And he said to me, Thou son of man, Behold I break the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and they eat bread by weight and in sorrow," which passages again rest on Lev. xxvi. 26. In regard to the voice heard, the only question is, what it proclaimed, not whence or by whom. It is hence unprofitable to seek to determine this. The sound came from "the midst of the four beasts," the midst of the representatives of the living beings on the earth, because the report concerns these. Those who take up wrong views of the Cherubim, who, for example, understand by them the evangelists, or the leading men in the church, or the four offices, know not what to make of "the midst of the four beasts." A measure, choenix, of wheat is stated by Suidas to be the daily support of a man (ἡμερήσιος τροφή). Herodotus makes a reckoning in B. VII. c. 187, how much corn was needed for the Persian army, if every one received a choenix of wheat per day and no more, showing that this was the necessary daily allowance. A denarius was the usual day's wages, according to Matt. xx. 2. The price of the corn is therefore certainly a high one, but still it cannot be a case of absolute famine. If barley bread were to be eaten, the common food of the poorer sort of people (John vi. 9, 13), which is three times cheaper than wheaten bread, a family could still be brought through with difficulty. On the words: "and the oil and the wine hurt not," Bengel remarks, "Barley and wheat are earlier than oil and wine. Here the discourse is of a time which is better for oil and wine than for barley and wheat. This, along with the other, points to a moderate scarcity: take heed, since the deficiency in the one kind can be made good by fulness in the other. Wheat and barley, oil and wine, are the most common and necessary means of life. The use of oil is considerably more common both in oriental and southern countries than with us." Ewald thinks that the wine and oil are here not hurt by a sort of irony. "The greater the want there is of corn, the most necessary of all the means of support, the more painfully we feel a superfluity in a kind of provision, not profitable to us, such as oil." But in this it is overlooked, that in oil and wine countries these productions have a quite different

value from what they have with us in the north of Germany. Corn, oil, and wine, are put together as the three chief products of Palestine, and the three essential necessaries of life, in Deut. xxviii. 38—40, Mic. vi. 15, Ezra iii. 7, and even the failure of the two latter we reckon there a calamity to the country. It is futher overlooked, that even the wheat and barley are not represented as perfect failures, but only as high priced. "Where the means of support are wanting, there certainly it cannot avail, that there is still enough of oil and wine. But here the price is still pretty moderate. Should it come to pass, that oil for the preparation of food and wine retain their usual price, the scarcity is undoubtedly sufficient to press upon the poorer class, but still is not insupportable. But then the fundamental passage of Ex. ix. 31, 32, is left out of view; on which Züllig remarks, "We have there the seventh Egyptian plague, the hail, smiting the flax and barley, but sparing the wheat and rye; and that because, as is expressly mentioned, the barley was already in the ear and the flax was bolled, while the wheat and the rye being later of growth escaped injury." If the sparing of the wheat and rye is there a mitigation of the divine judgment, so also here must be the sparing of the wine and oil. From the relation too of this seal to the following one, we can only think of a mitigation being intended. The subject here is not of a single divine judgment of the kind indicated, so that we should need to search in history for a particular period of scarcity, during which the representation here given was realized; but the prophecy has respect to an entire species of divine judgments, and the fulfilment is one that runs through all history. We have here just a prelude of the fulfilment of Matt. xxiv. 7, "There shall be famines in divers places." *Bad crops and scarcity are one of the scourges in the hand of God, with which he chastises unbelief and enmity to Christ and his church through the whole course of centuries, and punishes and breaks the arrogance of an apostate and rebellious world, so as to prepare the way for Christ's dominion.* Bengel: "The balances of this rider serve as a sign, that all the fruits of the ground, and consequently all heaven with its progressive influences, all the seasons of the year and the course of events, with their manifold changes and vicissitudes, are subject to Christ. They do well, who diligently mark the course and

issues of things, as connected, among other things, with the divine judgments, which are accomplished through failures of crops, scarcity, pestilence, earthquakes, waterfloods, fire, hail, thunder and lightning; and those chronicles and narratives, which are devoted to the collection of such materials, are to be highly prized. For they celebrate the work of the Most High, whose hand leaves wonderful traces behind it, not only in the operations of war and peace among earthly states, but also in the course of nature."

Ver. 7. *And when the fourth seal was opened, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come.* Ver. 8. *And I saw, and behold a pale horse, and he that sat on him, his name is death, and hell followed after him. And power was given him to kill the fourth part on the earth, with the sword, and hunger, and with death, and by the beasts of the earth.* Bengel: "Here we have combined together and increased indeed, what in the preceding seals was set forth by particulars, and in a less oppressive form." Certainly we have here a junction and an aggravation of the two preceding plagues; but the first seal is also improperly combined with them by Bengel. *War*, and indeed such a war, as scatters death and destruction far and wide, appears here in connection, not merely with scarcity, but with absolute famine, and along with that also disease and wild beasts. Striking as regards the relation of the fourth seal to the second and third, is the passage in Matt. xxiv. 6—8, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." The *for* in ver. 7 indicates, that this verse is to be regarded as a higher gradation of what is said in the preceding verse. There scattered wars were spoken of, but here a universal warfare, a kind of general uproar spreading over the whole earth. They were not to consider wars and rumours of wars as the immediate harbingers of the end. For before this should take place, there must be a rising of people against people, etc.; and even this should not bespeak the immediate approach of the end, but only the beginning of sorrows; as here, after the fourth seal, there are still then

more to follow. The second seal corresponds to the wars and rumours of wars in ver. 6, and also the third; as the scattered wars appear like heralds of the universal warfare, so the scarcity is like the herald of the famine. The pale[1] horse images wan death. As the rider under the fourth seal has the name of death, the second is personified war, the third personified scarcity. In the train of death *hell* appears; Greek, Hades Bengel: "The four seals turn upon living men; and so death, by which they are carried off, is most prominently represented, but hell, only in so far as he receives those who have been cut off by death, acting as death's hearse, on which account no separate horse is assigned him." He further remarks: "By the German word Hölle (hell), two Greek words are expressed, which are widely different. The one is Gehenna, and means in particular the place of fire and torment; the other is Hades, and corresponds to the Hebrew Scheol. Here it is the word Hades that is employed, which generally signifies the state of the dead, whether the soul may have gone to peace or may be under wrath." This remark cannot be held to be just. The word Hades is used in the New Testament only in reference to dead sinners—see my Commentary on the Psalms, vol. III. p. lxxxvi. (Eng. Trans.), and especially Luke xvi. 23, where to be in Hades and in torment are inseparably connected together. This usage prevails especially in the Revelation (comp. ch. i. 18, xx. 13); in the latter of the passages referred to it is the ungodly alone that are spoken of; Hades appears as their temporary receptacle after they leave the world. Now in the passage before us, there is no reason why we should take Hades in the Old Testament meaning. The subject of discourse is the judgments to be executed upon the ungodly world as opposed to the kingdom of Christ. For such to die and to go into hell is all one. Of the *elect* no account is made here. How it was to fare with them in the midst of these judgments, first appears in ch. vii.[2] If Hades

1 Χλωρός properly *green*, is used even by Homer in the sense of pale, Il. vii. 479, where χλωρὸν δέος is pale fear; comp. Artemidorus i. 77. Constantius, the father of Constantine the Great, according to Zonaras, was called Chlorus, on account of the paleness of his countenance.

2 It is from misapprehending the proper import and position of this seventh chapter, that Bengel makes the following remark here: "Whether and how far the servants of God were to be spared from the judgment, is not mentioned; for these are secured by the sealing in ch. vii., not from what is spoken of here, but from what follows under the

were used here in the Old Testament sense, there would have been no occasion for specially mentioning him after death. It is appropriate only as the place of torment, and is fitted to deepen the impression of terror. *The fourth part of the earth* is the fourth part of the human race. The judgment is a frightful one, especially when it is considered that where so many are carried away by death, untold sorrows must also be experienced by the rest. Even yet, however, it is not the end of all things. That only the fourth part is destroyed points to this, that fearful judgments were still to come, as we have yet but the first four of the seven seals of that book, which was filled with terrors.—The instruments of death are comprised in the number four. They stand in a certain relation to each other. Famine and pestilence not rarely break out in the train of war, and in the lands which have suffered depopulation by such causes ravenous wild beasts take possession, and become formidable to the people that are left (2 Kings xvii. 25.) The original passage is Ezek. xiv. 21, "My four sore judgments, the sword, and famine, and the noisome beast, and pestilence, I send against Jerusalem, that I may cut off from it man and beast," (comp. what is said more at length regarding them in ver. 12—20.) The result here is exactly the same as in Ezekiel, only that the noxious beasts, which were threatened so early as in Lev. xxvi. 22, take here the last place, because relatively they produce the smallest devastations. Hunger, war, pestilence, appear as the three great judgments of God in 2 Sam. xxiv. 11, ss.—By *death* here the pestilence must be understood, according to many expositors. Nor can there be any doubt that pestilence must be chiefly meant, by comparing the original passage in Ezekiel, and others, in which the pestilence is named as a main instrument of judgment. Still, since death is employed and not pestilence, λοιμός, which might so naturally have occurred from the discourses of our Lord, also because of the parallel passage ch. xviii. 8 (comp. besides ch. ii. 23), and because in the classical authors no trace is to be found

trumpets." Ewald still more distinctly goes against the connection, when he represents the plagues mentioned here as affecting the Christians not less than others, and even specially intended to put their faith to the proof. The analogy of the Egyptian plagues should have kept commentators from such irrelevant remarks, which would substitute the judgments on the Church for that of the world, for which alone preparation was made in ch. iv. and v.

of the supposed special signification of the word death, nor does the Sept. version, when more narrowly examined, afford any proof of it,[1] the word *death* must be taken as a comprehensive expression, which besides pestilence includes other things that tend to produce a general desolation. So already Bengel, "Death properly means pestilence, and yet we can also understand by it earthquakes, destruction by fire and water, inasmuch as multitudes of men are violently killed by these." There are not wanting examples in Scripture of the general being thus mentioned in the midst of the particular. Perfectly analogous is Gen. i. 26, "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of heaven, and over the cattle, and *over the whole earth*, and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth." The expression: over the whole earth, is put in the room of: over the wild beasts of the earth, but at the same time includes in itself whatever might be on the earth besides the things specially named. Then also Gen. xv. 21, where the mention of the Canaanites has led to the groundless supposition of there being a separate race with that name, from the manner of Scripture in this respect not being attended to. The general term introduced in such cases among others of a special nature, shews that the different kinds named are only to be regarded as representatives of the whole species.—All the judgments mentioned here are directed to the one point of chastising and breaking the pride and insolence of the world, restraining its persecuting zeal, and converting out of it what is to be converted, and laying it at the feet of Christ the conqueror. The fulfilment pervades all history, and is ever renewing itself before our eyes: as often as the world's hatred against Christ and his church breaks forth anew, the commission is also again given to him who sits upon the pale horse, and whose name is death. It is a spectacle of fearful magnificence to see him riding on through centuries. Bengel: "We know not what sorrows may come upon the earth even in our days, and much yet remains to run its course. O, how needful is it for us to make sure indeed of the love of the Lamb and his gracious pro-

1 When the LXX. render, as they often do, דֶּבֶר by θάνατος, it was not because they employed the latter simply in the sense of pestilence, but because they took the Heb. word in a general sense, as the word itself indeed properly means destruction in general, and is only to be taken in the more special sense of pestilence when the connection clearly determines it to be so used.

tection! Come what may, there shall assuredly be safety and blessing to his true people."

Ver. 9. *And when the fifth seal was opened, I saw under the altar the souls of those who were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they had.* Ver. 10. *And they cried with a loud voice and said: How long, Lord, thou holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth!* Ver. 11. *And there was given to every one of them a white garment, and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a time, until their fellow-servants and their brethren, who should also be killed as they were, should fulfil.* The book is the book of the Lord's judgments against a hostile world and for his church. With every particular seal that is opened, a part of its contents, a phase of the judgment must be laid open. At the head of the whole we see Christ marching forth as conqueror. All that follows must connect itself properly with this victorious emblem; nothing can happen which does not disclose Christ as a conqueror. We have not to do here with the signs of Christ's coming in general. Agreeably to the starting-point, the oppression of the church through the world-power, and the despairing thoughts this gave rise to in believers, the judgments that belong to this portion are the preliminary ones, that give indication of the end, in which the whole is to be consummated. Now, all the rest really bears this character. Only the seal before us forms an apparent exception, which yet cannot be suffered, without interrupting the symmetry of the whole, and imputing to the holy Seer a kind of thoughtlessness. If we should, for example, suppose with Hoffmann, that there is here set forth "the persecution of those who keep and maintain God's word and the testimony of the Lamb," as a sign of the end (which, however, is opposed by the circumstance of the persecution not being described, but pre-supposed as done, and only the question raised, when the time of recompense was to come), we should then place this seal out of the compass of the introductory vision in ch. iv., in which all announces the judgments of God on the ungodly world. The same may be said also of Ewald's view: "It is intimated that those plagues shall be especially destructive to the Christians, and that already many martyrs have fallen under them;" by which, also, the import of the preced-

ing seals is wholly misapprehended. The plagues of the four first seals have respect merely to the world; under them the blood of the martyrs is not shed; but they are the beginning of revenges for that blood. The difficulty vanishes whenever it is perceived, that the question, "How long dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?" which was spoken at a determinate period of time, had its occasion in the circumstances of the time, and inasmuch as it presupposes these to come into consideration here. *The impending provisional judgments are so frightful, more frightful even than those described in the first four seals, that they impel the mind to think of the approaching final judgment.* In the fourth seal only the fourth part was carried away; with all its terribleness it bears only a partial, provisional character. But here a general judgment begins to come forth on the inhabitants of the earth. The shaking of the foundations of the ungodly power appears to announce its final overthrow. Yet an indication is given, that, notwithstanding present appearances, this was not to take place quite immediately; and so the prayer of this seal has a definitive relation to the sixth, and prepares the way for it. What here begins to be vigorously entered on, is accomplished afterwards under the seventh seal, after the premonitory signs have under the sixth assumed an extensively threatening character. The cry of the martyrs, therefore, stands in a similar relation to the circumstances of the time, as Daniel's prayer, in ch. ix., occasioned by the overthrow of Babylon, that the Lord would fully execute his promises. The substance, in short, of the fifth seal is, *such catastrophes as bring to view the final judgment on the world, and in connection with that the glorification of the church.* Here, as in the preceding context, the Seer has primarily in view the Roman world, for it was this which in his time shed the blood of martyrs; it was this which primarily had led him, for his own interest and that of his companions in tribulation, to place himself on his watchtower, and look forth for what God might speak to him, and what he should answer to his complaint (Hab. ii. 1.) Great shakings of the Roman empire were what the cry of the martyrs, "how long," immediately called forth for the inquiring and expecting prophet. But the prophecy does not reach its end with the immediate fulfilment. It comes to life again, so soon as a new antichristian

power, which the Seer himself indicates in ch. xx. 7, ss., though certainly in a very general manner, treads in the footsteps of the old Roman power, and provides consolation for the church that shall then groan under its persecutions. It is quite characteristic of the groups of the seven seals and the seven trumpets, that every thing in them bears a general and comprehensive character, nothings refers specially or at all exclusively to the Roman empire. The special references to this belong to the later groups.—According to Lücke, a rebuke is given to the martyrs for their impatience, as seeking not to gratify their revenge, but to call down the judgment of God from heaven. But there is no symptom of a rebuke. The idea is, that the judgment, which through its surpassing frightfulness seemed to bring the end immediately into view, still did not carry this import, but only of a presage, that the final judgment was only to come when the world, through the continued persecution of the church, had filled up the measure of their sins; comp. Matt. xxiv. 6, "But ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." Whenever it is perceived that the introduction of the martyrs is of a purely poetical character, it becomes manifest that there can be nothing of impatience and rebuke.—These souls had already cried for vengeance, and it was the hearing of their cry that is reported in the four first seals. But that was still not the vengeance itself, which could be satisfied with nothing short of the entire overthrow of the adversaries, but only a prelude of it. Now, however, the circumstances have entered, which place the full vengeance distinctly in view.

The souls of the martyrs in ver. 9 are not the souls in the intermediate state, as expositors commonly suppose; the souls are meant of which it is said in the Old Testament, that they are in the blood—the animal souls (see, for example, Gen. ix. 5); they are murdered souls; but the blood itself might as well have stood, and in ver. 10 indeed is actually put instead of the souls here. This is plain from comparing the original passage, Gen. iv. 10, where the blood of Abel cries to God from the ground. (Züllig: "Only a dramatizing of the thought: your blood demands vengeance, according to Gen. iv. 10, ix. 5, etc.") It is in accordance with the phraseology of the Old and New Testament, in which

everywhere the *spirits* only, not the *souls* of the departed are spoken of—see my Commentary on the Psalms, vol. III. p. lxxxvii. *Trans.* It is shown by a comparison of the parallel passage, ch. xx. 4, where the discourse is of the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and where the prophet sees them live again. It is plain, finally, from the fact, that the souls were seen under the altar, in reference to Lev. iv. 7 (comp v. 9), "And the whole blood of the bullock shall he pour out at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offering, which is before the tabernacle of the congregation." Accordingly, since the place under the altar has nothing to do with souls in the higher sense, we can only understand by the souls the animal souls, which perish with the body. The introduction of the souls of the martyrs here, therefore, is a purely poetical one. They are in reality as little living, as the blood of Abel in reality cried to God from the earth. Life is only lent to them here, that they might utter what the thought of them, combined with the relations of the time, tended to as a result.—The *altar* is that of the heavenly sanctuary. For heaven is the stage on which all here proceeds—comp. ch. iv. 1. Two altars occur in the Revelation, namely, the golden altar of incense, and the altar of burnt-offering, which is not said to be golden. That is treated of in ch. viii. 3, 4, ix. 13; this in ch. xiv. 18, xvi. 7. Here it can only be the altar of burnt-offering that is meant. For this, as being the more public of the two, accessible, and open to the view of all, is always the one intended in Scripture, and especially in the Revelation, when the altar simply is mentioned, and without any further addition (comp. ch. xvi. 7.) And here we can the less think of any other than it, as on it alone were bloody offerings presented, and only under it could the blood be found, or the souls of those that had been slain.—Why does John see the souls of the martyrs under the altar? The answer is furnished by what has been already remarked. By this is already disposed of the view of those who consider the spot under the altar as the place "where they could best be kept under the view of God, to whom their obedience in their death had been a sweet smelling savour," as "a fine keeping place," as the first stage of that blessedness to which others afterwards succeed; so that some are even inclined to understand

by the altar Christ (Gerhard, Calov, &c.,) "under whose protection and shade the souls of the martyrs are preserved free from all perils and evils till the day of judgment." Such a view must at once give way as soon as it is established, that it is not the spirits but the animal souls of the martyrs that are here spoken of. It withdraws from the vengeance-cry of the martyrs, in ver. 10, the foundation which is here provided for it, and which rests on the circumstance, that their murdered souls lie upon the ground. For the *spirits* of the departed, too, the place under the altar, by which it is quite arbitrary to understand Christ, is a rare sort of keeping place! Then, such a view of the subject here brings it into conflict with what is elsewhere said of the state of the departed righteous, especially in this series itself; and in ch. vii. 9 ss., according to which the departed righteous stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white garments and palms in their hands, and this even partly during the tribulation which passes over the world. Bengel's supposition of different stages rests upon a misapprehension as to the relation of ch. vii. to ch. vi., and the regressive character which belongs to the latter. The whole of the sacrificial system is an allegory. The sacrifice of beasts symbolised that of men. The presentation of the burnt-offering in particular symbolised the consecration of the persons by whom and for whom they were brought, primarily indeed, their spiritual consecration, but this also in the external, in martyrdom, formed the chief and fundamental element. Hence, it was very natural to consider those who had yielded up their life for the cause of God and Christ, as having been sacrificed on the altar of the heavenly sanctuary; the more so, as from Isaiah liii. the death of Christ was wont to be considered as a sacrificial death, and to be set forth under sacrificial terms, not preventing, but prefiguring the death of his people for the truth (comp. ch. xii. 11.) The blood of the slain victims, which were offered on the material altar of burnt-offering, according to Lev. iv. 7, was to be poured out at the bottom of the altar. Accordingly it was natural to assign the murdered souls of the martyrs a place under the altar. There they lie, and complain of their murder, so long as it still remains unavenged. From this passage has arisen the custom of preserving the relics of the martyrs in the altars.—Bengel remarks, "who killed them? Babylon (ch. xviii. 24, and

in her, in the spiritual Babylon, that is Rome, was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all those that were killed upon the earth.) When Babylon is reckoned with, the blood that cries here is found in her, ch. xix. 2. Now, since the Roman martyrs in the fifth seal still cry for vengeance, it may be perceived that the plagues in the fourth seal do not particularly point to Rome, for that city remains yet unavenged.—When John received the vision, many Christians had already been executed; the persecution was past which had been raised by the savage Nero in Rome itself, in which Peter was crucified, and Paul was put to death by the sword." It is true that the Seer had primarily in his eye the Roman martyrs. Still, these only occupied the foreground—as surely as the contents of this fifth seal could not find merely a single fulfilment. But in so far as the Roman persecution is kept in view, we are not merely to think of the souls of those who were slain under Nero and onwards till the time of Domitian; but we are to regard the Seer as beholding along with these all such as, up to the period of the fifth seal, were destined to suffer amid the approaching catastrophes of the Roman dominion. He that saw through the causes of the bloody commencement could have no doubt as to the bloody progress. But from this Bengel quite erroneously concludes, that the Roman martyrs still cry for vengeance, and that the plagues in the first four seals do not especially respect Rome. The revenge which is sought here is the *definitive*, the *final* one. As certainly as the Roman persecution forms the starting-point, must the plagues in the first four seals *primarily* have respect to Rome (though still neither specially, nor exclusively so), and an exposition which does not recognise this, bears error on its very front. *For the word of God and for the testimony which they had*, therefore, for the very same reason that had occasioned John's banishment to Patmos, as stated in ch. i. 9. The testimony, according to this parallel passage, is the testimony of Jesus; and the addition, "of the Lamb," or "of Jesus Christ," which is found in some critical authorities, is right in substance. The expression: which they had, appears at first sight singular. We would have expected something, that more distinctly marked their activity. But according to the kind of representation adopted in the Apocalypse, the witnessing properly belongs to Christ, who is the true and faith-

ful witness—ch. i. 5, iii. 14. The martyrs, as they are commonly called, are but the depositaries of this testimony; those that are Christ's have but to abide true to the testimony they have received, to keep that which has been given them, ch. xi. 3, to hold what they have. Jesus witnessed concerning the truth during his walk on earth, and continually bears witness through the Spirit of the Father, which he sends—comp. John xv. 26, 27. The testimony also of Jesus, which is deposited in this book, belongs originally not to him, through whom it was communicated to the church, but Jesus testifies in it of himself, and John merely *has* the testimony of Jesus according to ch. xix. 10, comp. ch. xii. 17; where "having the testimony of Jesus" also occurs.

In ver. 10 it is not the *souls* that are the subject (for these could not speak of their blood), but the slain. The address, as it seems, is directed to Christ; for it is he who opens the fifth seal. The fundamental passage is Ps. lxxix. 10, "Make known to the heathen the revenging of the blood of thy servants, which has been shed." This again points back to the words of Moses, "for the blood of his servants will he avenge," which form the conclusion of the Song in Deut. xxxii. 43. The sad and wistful, but still believing (for faith alone wonders that God should be so long in executing revenge) *how long*, is very common in the Old Testament, and especially in the Psalms; for example, Ps. xxxv. 17, "O Lord, how long wilt thou look on?" Ps. xciv. 3, "How long, Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph?" The address, "O Lord," corresponds to the mention of the servants in the Psalms. Compare the expression "their fellow-servants," in ver. 11. The Lord must himself undertake for his servants and avenge them. As it belongs to them to serve him truly, and as they have done this even to the sacrificing of their life, so it rests with him to afford them true protection and avenge them. In the Psalms the prayer for help and vengeance is commonly founded on the circumstance of the Psalmist's being the Lord's servant. Bengel: "In the Greek here there is a word ὁ δεσπότης, which nowhere else occurs in the Revelation, and properly signifies a landlord, or head of a house. The martyrs cried to God as their own proper lord. Innocent blood, if shed without any charge of crime, and guiltless only in a common respect, cries; but much more does the blood of those cry, who have shed it for

the truth of heaven"—the servants of God and Christ, who had sacrificed their lives in their service. The New Testament constantly uses the word δεσπότης, lord or householder, in denoting the relation of any one to servants—comp. 1 Pet. ii. 9, "Let servants be subject to their masters with all fear." Luke ii. 29, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," Acts iv. 28, 29; 1 Tim. vi. 1; Tit. ii. 9; 3 Pet. i. 1; Jude ver. 1, 4. The *holiness* denotes God's absolute separation from the world, in its impotence and transitoriness; comp. on ch. iv. 8. In reference to the *truth*, see on ch. iii. 7. The divine truthfulness in keeping promise is only a particular element of the truth, and the idea of the truth is weakened, if it is wholly confined to that. The martyrs sought for revenge as such, so that the nature of their God might manifest itself therein, which would otherwise be at fault; for if revenge was wanting God could not be God; as certainly as he is the holy and the true, he must execute it. But they also desired revenge, as appears from ver. 11, because it is the necessary condition of the church's glorification, and peculiar to it. If with Wolf we take away the former, one does not see how provisionally and as an earnest white clothing could be given them. The fulfilment of what is here prayed for is disclosed in ch. xix. 2, where, in the words of Bengel, "the desire of the martyrs, with a very remarkable repetition of their words, is transformed into a song of praise." God is there praised by great hosts in the heavenly world, "because his judgments are true and righteous, because he has judged the great whore, who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." Comp. ch. xviii. 20. As the groups, however, are each complete in themselves, the fulfilment must be indicated even in this group itself; and such an indication is actually found under the sixth and seventh seals, which disclose the full vengeance of God on the persecutors of the church.—That there can be nothing here of a revengeful spirit on the part of the martyrs, is clear from what has been remarked on the import of the whole scene, according to which also conclusions such as those of Bossuet are to be rejected: that pious souls know that God has still not avenged their blood, wherefore they must be cognizant of all that is going on upon earth. We have shewn, that the introduction of the souls of the slain is of a purely poeti-

cal character. But the thought that God avenges the blood of his people on their persecutors is an entirely scriptural one, and one thoroughly in accordance with the mind of the Saviour. The general law, which receives here a special application, was uttered by our Lord in Matth. vii. 1, 2. He himself applies it to the very case before us in Matth. xxiii. 35, 36, "So that upon you may come all the righteous blood, that has been shed on the earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zecharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." And in Luke xviii. 7, 8, "Shall not God avenge his elect, who cry to him day and night? I tell you, he will avenge them and that speedily." The last passage shews, that not only is the revenge agreeable to the nature of God, but also that the wish for the revenge is acceptable, whenever it proceeds from the right affection, a desire for the glorification of the divine nature, and the exaltation of his church on earth. This, indeed, might be understood of itself; for what God does from the necessity of his nature, this may, and even should be wished for by believers; see my remarks on the Vindictive Psalms, in the dissertations appended to my Commentary.—The inhabitants of the earth appear here as the persecutors. The small flock that have been redeemed from the earth are not formally mentioned as an exception to the worldly mass; comp. the words of our Lord in Matth. xxiv. 9, "Ye shall be hated of *all nations* for my name sake."

According to ver. 11 there was given provisionally a *white garment* to each of the suppliant martyrs, in answer to their prayer, as this could not at present receive a complete fulfilment. What has been said on the white as the colour of lucid splendour, the symbolical image of glory, at ch. vi. 2, iv. 4, may be compared. According to ch. iii. 4, 5, and vii. 14, a white garment is the clothing of the blessed generally, and their clothing as such: without any exception they go from this life immediately into glory. Hence the expression here, "there was given," can only be referred to the consciousness of the Seer, as a thing connected with the fifth seal, not to the actual fact; for long before this had martyrs finished their testimony, Antipas for example, who had died before the seals began at all to be opened. For John's sake and that of the church there was given to them what they already in fact possessed. The thought can only be this,

that they must be satisfied meanwhile with the heavenly glory, till the time should come when the kingdom of glory would be set up on the earth. Had the slain martyrs presented themselves to the Seer at once in their white garments, their cry would have made little impression on him. Bengel's view of the giving of the white garments as an extraordinary reward and distinction ("In fact something was given to these souls, which in their blessedness they did not possess. White Stolæ, or white long robes, are an excellent ornament and high honour") cannot be maintained in accordance with the parallel passages. As little can the view of Vitringa, who thinks that the giving of the white garments must symbolize the fact, "that those martyrs shall be openly justified in the church, and they shall be acknowledged and honoured as partakers in the glory and kingdom of Christ, while their case for a long time appeared in a doubtful light." According to the parallel passages, the white garments denote, not the acknowledgment of the martyrs on the earth, but the heavenly glory conferred on them. Bossuet's remark: "A white garment—this is the glory of pious souls in expectation of the resurrection," is fitted to create a misunderstanding unless it were defined in some such way as this: the white garment, in itself a mark of glory generally, signifies here from the connection the contrast to the completed glory, etc.—The *resting*, *ἀναπαέσθαι* (comp. Mark vi. 31, xiv. 41; Luke xii. 19; Matt. xi. 29) is carefully to be distinguished from simple *resting* and ceasing, *καταπαέσθαι*. Hence we are not to think, with Bengel, of a resting of the souls from their *cry*. The *ἔτι* alone is against this, since it presupposes, that they had even till now been resting, and intimates, that they must still continue to enjoy their rest, till the period when they should be admitted to their full inheritance. We can only think of a resting and refreshing of themselves from the sufferings and troubles of this life. Comp. ch. xiv. 13, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord . . . that they may rest from their labours," *ἵνα ἀναπαύσωνται ἐκ τῶν κόπων αὐτῶν*. As there the resting corresponds to the *blessed*, so does it here to the *white garments*. The blessedness and glory before the resurrection consist especially in the resting—as also in ch. vii., in the representation of the state of the blessed before the resurrection the negative element is the predominating one: they

shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. Resting from the troubles and annoyances of the earthly pilgrimage—this is a blessed earnest that God will certainly give to his people a rest in most intimate fellowship with Christ; for otherwise dying could be no gain to them, Phil. i. 21. See on the state of the departed till the resurrection, Nitzsch's excellent remarks in his System, § 215.—For: a time, some critical helps have: a little time, *χρόνον μικρόν*. But the attribute is evidently borrowed from ch. xx. 3. The simple: a time, is found elsewhere also, where it was not wished to define the period more exactly, Acts xix. 22; comp. Isa. xxvii. 11, Sept., Tob. xiv. 4, and Neh. xiii. 6 in the Hebrew. In ch. x. 6, 7: "And he swore—that henceforth there should be *no* time more. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall sound, the mystery of God shall be finished, as he has declared to his servants the prophets," it is intimated, that the delay fixed here had come near its close. From that passage we are here to supply: then shall the mystery of God, which he declares to his servants, the prophets, be finished, and consequently in the place of the resting the complete glory promised by them shall enter along with its necessary ground-work, the completed revenge on the enemies of the kingdom of God.—In the expression: till they should complete or fulfil (*πληρώσωσι*), we must supply: their course or their work. To complete, fulfil one's course, work, the gospel, that is, the service connected with it, is a mode of speech of which St Paul was peculiarly fond; see especially Acts xx. 22—24, "And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befal me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me there. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to me, that I may complete my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus, to testify of the gospel of the grace of God." Also 2 Tim. iv. 6—8, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day; and not to me only,

but to all them also, who love his appearing." (See, besides, Rom. xv. 19; Luke ix. 31; Acts xiii. 35, xii. 25, xiv. 26.) From a reference to these passages, in which just as here the completion of the course is put in connection with martyrdom, we can explain the elliptical mode of expression. It must have respect to this very reference. The different variations in the text have arisen from the oversight of this ellipsis.[1]—So far as the idea is concerned, there is a close resemblance in Heb. xi. 39, 40, "And these all (the faithful witnesses of the Old Testament) having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." If the completion were precipitately hurried on, the precious opportunity would be denied those who come after us, of saying with St Paul, "I have finished my course," etc.—The naming of the *brethren*, still more than that of the *fellow-servants*, points to this, that we must not lay hold of anything that is disadvantageous to them. Because these are their fellow-servants, God must not have a partial respect to them; because they are their brethren, they must not desire that any such respect should be had. They must be satisfied with the white clothing, and the rest after their labour, until opportunity has also been given those to deserve the crown of righteousness, who should fight the good fight, and love not their lives unto death, during the further persecutions that should be carried on by the beast, under the Roman dominion, under the ten kings, and lastly under the assault of Gog and Magog. One must be very much captivated by Jewish representations, if by the *fellow-servants* one understands the future martyrs from the heathen, and by the *brethren* those that should come from the house of Israel. The Apocalypse knows nothing of such a distinction. It would need in such a case to have been first of all expressly stated, that by the slain for the word of God only martyrs from among the Jews were to be understood.

[1] Of these the reading πληρωθῶσι has the greatest support in MSS., while πλησώσονται, which is vindicated by Ewald, has little or none, as was long ago sufficiently shown by Bengel. But the former also, when more narrowly examined, yields hardly any satisfactory meaning. The common rendering: till they have been completed, for till their number has been made up, is hard. So also is that of Vitringa: till the whole measure of the sufferings appointed to them might be full. No parallel passages can be produced for either.

The sixth seal follows now in vers. 12—17. First, *in vers.* 12—14, *the plague is described which alights upon the ungodly world. This description is completed in the number seven, divided by the four and three; the earthquake, the sun becoming black, the bloody moon, the falling stars of heaven—the disappearing heavens, the mountains and islands moved out of their places. Then in vers.* 15—17 *the impression is delineated, which these facts produced upon those who were affected by them, the indescribable anguish by which they were seized.*— This seal has had a false interpretation put on it in two different ways. First, by those who suppose (as recently Hoffmann), that the subject here discoursed of is the end of all, the day of judgment. What this view has to support it, rests on mere appearance. That the things, which in vers. 12—14 appear to carry one over the boundaries of the present world, only belong to the figurative style of the representation, is evident from vers. 15—17, in which we find ourselves in the existing state of things. Only by adhering to the figurative style also does it become clear, why precisely the heavens, and the mountains, and the islands are brought together. But the most important, and of itself alone quite decisive ground against the interpretation in question, is the circumstance, that we are here still only at the sixth seal, and another, the seventh, follows. The final judgment must first enter with this seventh seal. For, according to the starting-point of this group, and the whole contents of the book, the seals cannot reach farther than the judgment. Then, the judgment, which meets us under this seal, does not at all bear the character of the final judgment. We behold here kings of the earth, the nobles, etc., certainly in great trouble and despair; but the deadly blow is still not struck against them even at the close. Of what really does characterise the final judgment—the resurrection of the dead and their appearance before the tribunal of Christ—there is not a word said. Finally, that this judgment with all its terrors is still but a preparatory one, appears from the original passages of the Old Testament, and likewise from the declaration of our Lord in Matt. xxiv. 29, which is to be regarded as the text on which the Seer comments. That the last judgment cannot be meant there, that the passage is to be understood figuratively of times of great tribulation and uproar, is clear from what follows,

in which men still appear to be living after the catastrophe has taken place; and the manifestation of Christ, corresponding here to the seventh seal, only appears afterwards.—While the signification of this seal is *over-valued* by this class of expositors, by another it it *rated too low*. It is so by those who, not perceiving that the Revelation falls into a series of independent groups, think that the seventh seal comprehends the whole of the rest of the book. So great and lengthened a course of things could not possibly have followed the sixth seal if this were taken in its natural import, and hence the attempt must be made to rob it of this; as was done by Bengel, for example, when he set forth the singular view that the end of the world is here merely exhibited beforehand to the unrighteous dead. If we do not stand here exactly at the final end, we yet stand at the *beginning* of the end. "The great day of his wrath" is immediately before the door, is already as good as come; and ch. vii. can only come in as an episode between ch. vi. 17 and ch. viii. 1, where the dawn of that day is announced. The two verses are very closely connected together, and in ch. vii. we have only a repetition of what belongs to an earlier period.—The historical realization of the section before us is to be found, first, in the times of complete uproar and begun destruction in respect to that world-power, whose persecution of the church was the primary occasion of the composition of this book, and whose approaching overthrow must therefore have been peculiarly comforting to the church—the Roman. The impending terrible convulsion of this power also appears in ch. xvi. 18, under the symbol of a mighty earthquake. What in this respect is marked here in its general features, is more fully detailed in the following groups. But the prophecy does not come to an end with this first realization. It continually revives anew, whenever a new persecuting world-power steps into the place of the Roman. As another of this kind Gog and Magog are named in this very book. The original passage also, Matt. xxiv. 29, has had more than one fulfilment:—the first a provisional one, which our Seer already saw behind him in the overthrow of Jerusalem, a more general one in the breaking up of the Roman state; the most extensive one is still future, and may already be descried in its beginnings.—The mistake of several of the older expositors, who refer the darkening of the sun, etc., to the fates

of the church instead of the judgments on the world, against which the elect are fully secured by the sealing vision in ch. vii., has been well exposed by Vitringa.

Ver. 12. *And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake, and the sun was black as sackloth of hair, and the whole moon was like blood.*—In place of the *earthquake*, Züllig puts a commotion generally, on the ground that the heavens and the sea were also affected by it. But the word when standing alone is always used of the earthquake. So in particular in Revelation, ch. viii. 5, xi. 13, 19, xvi. 18. And Züllig's reason is disposed of by the remark that the heavens and the sea are spoken of in a figurative sense, and in point of fact the whole catastrophe is confined to the earth. "Storms, earthquakes, are not images of God's omnipotence in general; they are the natural symbols of the *destroying* omnipotence of God, and were regarded as such by the nations of antiquity. Earthquakes were viewed as precursors of approaching ruin; comp., for example, the remarkable passage of Herodian, VI. 98, from which it appears that he himself, participating in the general belief, held them to be such; also IV. 28; Thuc. II. 8; Justin. XL. 2. As the manifestation of the destroying power of God in inanimate nature calls forth, even in the rudest minds, the anticipation that the same destroying power shall also manifest itself in the relations of men; as in every storm, in every earthquake, we behold a sort of prophecy in act concerning God's judgments on men; so, on the other hand, where these judgments are experienced, where mournful disorder and distress on all sides prevail, even external nature seems, to the troubled and anxious mind, to be dissolved; it feels as if heaven and earth were convulsed together. And this explains how the manifestations of the destroying power of God in nature—how storms and earthquakes should be so frequently used in Scripture as images of similar manifestations of the same power in the affairs of man. Hence, for example, the description of the storm in Ps. xviii., to denote the fearful ruin which God was ready to bring on the enemies of the Psalmist. Hence, too, Isa. xiii. 13, where the contemplation of the destruction that overhung Babylon is extended so as to embrace a judgment over the whole earth, of which it was a prelude, an execution in part, and at the same time a matter-of-fact prophecy.

"Therefore will I make the heaven to tremble, and the earth shall quake from its place, through the anger of the Lord of Hosts, and in the day when his anger burns." So also Ps. lx. 3, where sore calamities of the covenant people appear under the image of an earthquake, by which great breaches of the earth had been occasioned. Even in the poetical prose of the first book of the Maccabees, ch. i. 28, the terrible sufferings by which the covenant people had been visited, appears directly as an earthquake." (Christology on Hag. ii. 6.) In Ps. xlvi. 6, "the nations roared, the kingdoms were moved," is parallel; and "he utters his voice, the earth melts." The tumultuous roaring of the nations, the moving of the kingdoms, appears as a spiritual earthquake sent among them by God; so also in ver. 2. In Hag. ii. 6 the words, "I shake the heaven and the earth and the sea and the dry land," are explained by those in ver. 7, "and I shake all heathen." If it is established, that by the latter is meant the causing of the foundations of empire among the heathen to shake, the dissolving of their power, then the shaking of heaven and earth must be referred to the same. In Hag. ii. 22 likewise, by the words, "I shake heaven and earth," great revolutions are indicated, through which the condition of things on earth was to be so changed that the highest should become lowest. This is manifest from ver. 23, which serves as an explanation, "and I overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen, and I overthrow the chariots of war and their warriors, and the horses and the riders come down, every one by the sword of his brother." From this commentary we perceive that the shaking of heaven and earth denotes great revolutions, which God by his almighty power brings about in the state of nations—bloody wars, by which he precipitates from their seat of power those who proudly lifted themselves up against him. It is this that is denoted by the words: and there was a great earthquake, which we can the more readily understand, as we have now the beginning of such an earthquake before our eyes, and which always takes place where the earth rises up in rebellion against its Creator and Redeemer. The shining of the heavenly lights is the symbol and the visible reflection of the grace of God. Hence its extinguishment by the sun and moon becoming dark in storms and earthquakes, &c., is regarded as a prelude of severe

judgments. Comp. Joel iii. 4, "the sun shall be changed into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes," and the Christology on the passage. The main point in such representations was not the sign itself, but the state of mind it indicated, the consciousness of guilt, which filled the soul with thoughts of an avenging God, and the posture of affairs which brought him strikingly into view. Hence we find an explanation, why in the Old Testament the darkening of the sun and moon usually appears as an image of troublous and distressing times. When such really come, the lights of heaven appear to be extinguished. The sun seems to shine only for the prosperous. Isaiah, after having described heavy troubles that were going to break in upon the land for its ungodliness, says, in ch. v. 30, "There was darkness in its heaven." Jeremiah, when describing the judgment that was impending over Judah, says, in ch. iv. 23, "and I saw the earth, and behold! it was waste and desolate, and the heaven and it had no lights." And in ch. xv. 9, "her sun went down while it was yet day." In Ezekiel, ch. xxxii. 7, 8, we meet with the extinguishing of the heavenly lights in his delineation of the overthrow of Pharaoh the king of Egypt, to indicate such unutterable evils as it would be impossible to escape from. In Amos, ch. viii. 9, 10, it is said, "and it comes to pass in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I make the sun to go down at mid-day, and give darkness to the land in clear day. And I turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentations; and I bring upon all loins sackloth, and upon every head baldness; and I make it as the mourning for a first-born, and its end as a bitter day." Michaelis: "I make the sun to go down, that is, I make all that is mournful suddenly rush in." In Mic. iii. 6 it is said, "And the sun goes down for the prophets, and the day becomes dark for them," meaning, "that everything of a dismal kind was ready to overtake them." Comp. besides Isa. xiii. 10; Zech. xiv. 6; Joel iii. 15.—Since there is such a regular figurative use in Old Testament Scripture of the darkening of the sun and moon, we shall not think of anything else in the declaration of our Lord, which forms the immediate basis of the passage before us, "But soon after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light;" we shall only find in it a

description of the most dismal and mournful times—such times as existed immediately before the destruction of Jerusalem, and as are now again beginning to appear, when the lights of heaven are as good as extinguished for the miserable, because these are no longer sensible of the enlivening rays they emit. This view also is rendered necessary by the falling of the stars from heaven that immediately follows, which must be figuratively understood, both from the parallel passages in the Old Testament, and because the stars falling from heaven, if understood otherwise, would crush and destroy all, while in the following verses the tribes of men are spoken of as being still in existence.—The comparison of the sun with sackloth of hair (sackloth as the mourning-garb again in ch. xi. 3, comp. Matt. xi. 21) is not to be referred to the *blackness*—for hair-cloth was usually made of camel's hair, Matt. iii. 4—but to the want of all bright and shining colour. No stronger contrast to the glittering splendour of the sun could be found than the sackloth of hair worn by mourners, the natural hatefulness of which is still further heightened by its symbolical use.—On the expression: the whole moon, Züllig remarks, "as she appears only when at full moon, so that the sight would be still more terrible." The *whole*, however, is wanting in many manuscripts; and is also rendered somewhat suspicious by never occurring in the fundamental passages of the Old Testament.

Ver. 13. *And the stars of heaven fall to the earth, as the fig-tree casts its unripe fruit, when shaken by a strong wind.* Every thing mighty is in Scripture transferred to heaven; see on ch. xii. 9. But the stars of heaven, in particular, are so natural an image and symbol of the greatness and splendour of worldly rulers, that the employment of them in this sense is found among almost all nations, and pervades also nearly all Scripture, from Num. xxiv. 17 onwards (see my work on Balaam there.) In ch. xxxiv. 4, 5, Isaiah says in words, from which those here are principally taken, to which also those of our Lord in Matt. xxiv. 29 refer, "And all the host of heaven is dissolved, and the heavens are rolled together as a scroll; and all their host falls down, as a leaf falls from off the vine, and as that which is withered from the fig-tree. For my sword is bathed in heaven, behold it comes down on Idumea." It is the same thing in meaning that is expressed in ver. 12, "Their nobles! there is none whom one calls

to the kingdom, and all their princes have come to nothing." The heaven is the *princes-heaven,* the entire order of kings and nobles. The stars are individual princes and nobles. The "in heaven" of ver. 5 puts this beyond a doubt, as heaven stands there for the region where the sword rages, which could not be said of heaven in the proper sense. Michaelis remarks, "That this prophecy cannot be understood immediately of the last day, is clear from the circumstance, that the desolation of many regions follows this rolling up of the heavens." In Isa. xxiv. 21, "And it comes to pass on that day, that the Lord will visit the host of the height in the height, and the kings of the earth on the earth," the second member is explanatory of the first. No trace is to be found anywhere else in the Old Testament of a punishment of "the bad heavenly powers." The whole chapter has to do only with judgments on the earth. The *height* occurs in ver. 4, xxvi. 5, in undoubted reference to the heights of the earth. In Isa. xiv. 12, the now fallen and prostrate king of Babylon appears under the image of the morning-star falling from heaven. In this book itself, ch. xii. 4, in imitation of Dan. viii. 10, mighty kings appear as the stars of heaven, and their overthrow is represented as the falling down of these to the earth. In ch. viii. 10 a great star of heaven denotes a mighty ruler.—In regard to the image of the fig-tree we may apply what Bengel says of the *book* in the next verse, "When Scripture compares something very great to what is very small, the majesty and omnipotence of God, before which the great is as the small, is thereby magnified, Job xxxviii. 9." To the "strong wind," corresponds the mighty storm of the divine judgments; comp. ch. vii. 1.—In the verse before us, therefore, we are told, that those who have been the leaders in the conflict with the kingdom of God, in the persecution of his church, shall first experience his avenging hand; that the abuse of their power must draw after it the shaking and the absolute loss of that power: an announcement, the truth of which is realizing itself anew. With devout wonder we see before our eyes, how the stars of heaven are falling to the earth, precisely as a fig-tree, when violently shaken by the wind, casts off its unripe fruit. But the immediate fulfilment was the overthrow of the possessor of the old Roman power, the bright morning-star, that shone in heaven at the time the Apocalypse was composed.

Ver. 14. *And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.* That the heaven is the heaven of the princes is clear from what has been already remarked in the two preceding verses. The heaven is used so not merely in Isaiah, but also in Haggai. Vitringa has remarked, "The image of the heaven rolled together denotes the annihilation of the whole civil and ecclesiastical system of the empire, here under consideration. For, in the prophetic style the whole body of the rulers of a people have the designation of heaven applied to it; but the people that are subject to the rulers, are represented as the earth." A book rolled together is in a manner vanished, since nothing can any longer be seen and read in it. The figure of the sea as a designation of the world and the nations was found already in use by the Seer; see on this figure my Commentary on Ps. cvii. 23, and the passages there referred to; and with himself it is quite common, see at vii. 1, viii. 8, x. 2, xii. 18, xvi. 3, xx. 13. It is a farther extension of this image, when particular kingdoms are denoted by the islands, along with the current designation by mountains. So, besides this passage, in ch. xvi. 20. But here also the Seer connects himself with the Old Testament. Isaiah makes very frequent mention of the islands, more frequently than might have been expected, had he followed the common phraseology. In ch. xli 1, xlix. 1, li. 5, he places the islands and the nations together. In ch. xi. 11 he puts "the islands of the sea" as a compound expression after the enumeration of a series of particular kingdoms. Also in ch. xxiv. 15, under the islands of the sea are most suitably understood the kingdoms of the earth. Likewise in ch. xlii. 4, "And on his law shall the islands wait," where the LXX. and Matthew in ch. xii. 21 have *nations* instead of islands. "To the islands will he repay their gifts," it is said in ch. lix. 18. Before, the prophet had been speaking of the adversaries and opponents of the Lord. But the islands in the common sense were not specially leagued in the impious resistance to the Lord. The same figurative use of the islands also occurs in Zephaniah, ch. ii. 11. The islands of the heathen there could only mean their countries in general. For, in the parallel clause are the gods of the earth, and the inland territories of the Ammonites and Moabites belong to the islands. These are

the particular, while under the name of islands a rise is made to the general. It is a similar expansion of the image of the sea, when in Ps. cvii. 23—32, and Isa. xlii. 10, the inhabitants of the world appear as sea-farers, and when, in Rev. viii. 9, men are spoken of as creatures in the sea, and their habitations, villages, and cities as ships.

Ver. 15. *And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the captains, and the rich and the strong, and every bondman and every freeman hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains.* Ver. 16. *And say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him, who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.* Ver. 17. *For the great day of his wrath is come, and who is able to stand?* In the kings and other magnates we have the explanation of the stars in ver. 13, of the heaven in ver. 14, and see that by these was meant all that is brilliant, great, and mighty. In vers. 12—14 we had *what was done towards them*, but here it is, *how they were thereby affected.* Bengel remarks, "The very people who were least afraid on earth, who were themselves most feared, and in this sought their great glory and joy, stand foremost." The classes named number *seven* altogether, divided by the three and the four—the three the governing party, with the king at their head, then the possessors of dignity in civil and military life. Along with the seven number there is the four, as the signature of the earth, the king and three pairs, beside "the possessors of dignity in civil and military life," the "notables also, whether through wealth or power, and the people, bond and free." With the enumeration here we may compare that in Mark vi. 21: Herod gave on his birth-day a feast to his great men, and captains, and principal men of Galilee. The principal men there (πρῶτοι) are here the rich and the strong. Bengel: "The *great* are those who have most to say in matters of policy, sit at the helm of the state, execute important commissions and other things of moment. In Spain they bear precisely the name of grandees, elsewhere of magnates, senators, members of Parliament, etc., and often indeed exercise more power than the kings themselves, and rule over kings. The rich and the strong are often self-willed and insolent persons, who are full of confidence in themselves, and ask nothing after God the Almighty.

Then come at last all bondmen and free, consequently all men, even those who have no peculiar distinction. Every individual is either a bond person or free, though servitude and freedom have different stages among the higher and lower ranks of society. They know not whither to betake themselves. What in times of outward security were the most frightful places, those they now flee to for refuge, and that in vain. . . . Sometimes in summer, when a heavy storm, charged with lightning, thunder, and wind, breaks forth, how frequently will men, even those who are naturally courageous, and in fields of slaughter and other warlike encounters are undismayed, be seized with a fear and trembling, even creeping into vaults and such like places, because God now causes something to appear of his majesty, although it is still the time of his forbearance! How shall it then be, when the Almighty in full earnest strikes terror into his enemies! How insupportable must it be to the wicked!" The kings, according to the more exact import given by the connection, are such as breathe hostility to God and Christ. For, we have here a phase of God's judgment on the ungodly world.—The *bondmen*, according to ch. xiii. 16, also receive the mark of the beast. There, and in ch. xix. 18, it is "free and bond," but here "bond and free," that the whole might not find its termination with the bondmen, who can here occupy but a subordinate position. Here respect is had mainly to those who stood in the more prominent places. Slaves were not the object of dread on the part of those for whom John prophecied; these had to suffer especially from kings and men of power; and if persons in a state of bondage became afraid and found themselves in a miserable condition, such was less to be wondered at, and not so striking a proof of the power of the Lamb.—Julian's exclamation: O Galilean, thou hast conquered, was a fulfilment of our prophecy. But the course of history furnishes many that must unite in this confession, and at the present time especially it is again extorted. Those who shortly ago lifted themselves proudly up against him who sits on the throne and against the Lamb, the advocates of Rationalism, who robbed God and Christ of their honour, the persecutors of the true church, are fain now to hide themselves in caves and clefts of the rocks. In what form the wrath of the Lamb manifested itself in regard to the immediate object of the prophecy

against the all-dominant Roman power of St John's time, will be found in ch. xvii. in connection with the ten kings, whom he armed against Rome. But to stand simply at that would be no better than if one should confine the declarations of Christ regarding his coming for judgment to Jerusalem, which, as being the hostile power at the time, was more immediately respected in them.—The words, "they hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains," refer to Isa. ii. 19, "And they (those who during the time of forbearance were such proud enemies of God) go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." The next clause, "And they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us," points to Hos. x. 8, where it is said in regard to the apostate ten tribes, "The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel shall be destroyed; the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us." This word had already been transferred by our Lord from the Old to the New Covenant, Luke xxiii. 30, where he says, after announcing great tribulations on Jerusalem, "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us." The carrying of the Old Testament prophecies, which had primarily another object, over to the New, is a manifest proof how inadmissible it is to confine the prophecies of the New Testament to their more immediate object, and provides us with a kind of finger-post for the right understanding of them.—We are not, with Züllig, to suppose that there was properly a first and second thought: "Their first thoughts, therefore, must have been to withdraw themselves there, in the most secret and inaccessible hiding-places, from the judgment of the approaching avenger; but afterwards, when they saw that he could also reach them there, they sought in the anguish of despair rather to be buried under the precipitated mountain-rocks than to suffer the recompense due to their misdeeds." We should rather take the two together: They concealed themselves there indeed, but the misery of their existence and the distress which accompanied them there, gave birth to the wish that they might be buried under the rocks. It seemed better to them to die at once than to continue in being. Züllig remarks on their call to the rocks to fall

on them, "They wished it, but it did not take place, at least not here, because in this preparatory vision there was still no actual infliction of judgment;" more correctly, because we are here still at the sixth seal and not the seventh, where the judgment comes finally to an end. Ch. ix. 6 is parallel as to the meaning; it is said there at the first woe, the fifth trumpet, the locust plague, "And in those days shall men seek death and not find it, they shall desire to die and death will flee from them."—On the expression: before the face, Bengel remarks, "which is set against evil-doers," Ps. xxxiv. 16; Rev. xi. 18; Ps. ii. 5.—It has been affirmed without the least reason that the name of the Lamb suits better in the mouth of followers than of adversaries. Here it is quite in its place. It points to the quiet patience and meekness of Christ (see on ch. v. 6), which had encouraged them to set themselves against him, instead of allowing themselves to be thereby drawn to repentance. Now they must feel to their horror that the Lamb is also the Lion. As much as: him whom we thought we could venture to despise on account of his mildness and leniency, but who to our dismay manifests the other side of his character.—In ver. 17 the expression, "it is come," indicates the assured conviction: it is already as good as present. For, in reality the day was still not come, since they could not in that case have continued in life; and as certainly as we are here only at the sixth seal, it cannot be till the seventh, that the judgment of the world actually arrives. But at the beginning of the end they feel as if the end itself were present. The same anticipatory character belongs to the, "it is come," in ch. xi. 18. —The *great day* is from Joel ii. 11, "Great is the day of the Lord and very terrible, and who can bear it?" We find "the who can stand," also in Mal. iii. 2, "And who shall abide the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears," comp. Luke xxi. 36.—The *standing* is in contrast to the sinking down together of the guilty out of distress and fearful apprehension of what was coming. That these could not stand appears too well from the preceding verses, in which their misery and despair are delineated. Bengel remarks on this part, "Now many treat it quite lightly. But it is no joke. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and to seek, yet without being able to find, a refuge from the Almighty as an enemy, when

heaven and earth are convulsed together. On the other hand, for those who have passed from wrath to grace, it is a matter of great joy that things cannot always continue as they are with the world, but that all shall be broken up, and a new order of things arise."

Chap. vii.—We have an episode before us in this chapter. The painful solicitude, which could scarcely fail to arise even in the faithful, on account of the judgments that threaten the world, as these were developed in a lengthened series under the first six seals, from which, as themselves also living in the world, it might seem as if they could hardly escape, is here met by a double consolation: first, that God holds over them his protecting hand, while war and terrors of every kind overspread the world, vii. 1—8; and then, that there is opened up a view into that celestial glory, which awaits the chosen after the short tribulation of the present time, vers. 9—17.

First, in regard to the portion, vers. 1—8, we have to inquire what precisely is the place of this scene? The answer is at once furnished by ver. 1. According to it the winds have still not moved, the judgments on the world have not yet begun to take effect. But these begin with the very first seal, and not merely with the sixth. So that it is here represented, *what is to take place before the accomplishment of that, which is announced in the opening of the sixth seal.* Those who think that the faithful are here placed in security against the tribulation, that is spoken of in what follows,[1] have—apart from the consideration that we are not justified in going out of the group of the seven seals, which stops at ch. viii. 1—this against them, that here no trace is to be found of judgments that have already preceded; up till this time there is only *guilt* in the world, but not *punishment.* And this also serves as a refutation of those, who refer the security only to the judgment of the sixth seal. This last opinion has also against it the consideration, that the four number of the angels and the winds points to a variety and fulness in the divine judgments, such as are found to exist only when we take into account the sixth seal. In regard to the regressive character of this portion,

[1] Bengel: "This already points to the trumpets. God's servants are secured by the sealing against the plagues under the trumpets, and especially under the trumpets of the four first angels."

which has proved a stumbling-block to so many expositors, Hoffmann remarks well: "It should not stumble us, that the earth here appears still unhurt. Since these two parts, the world's destruction and the church's preservation, are co-ordinate to each other, it might happen without disadvantage to the intended result and the knowledge to be obtained of it, that the theatre, which was comprehended in the general dissolution that was spoken of as taking place in the world's destruction, presents itself anew as still unhurt, when a representation comes to be made of the foresight that was to be exercised in the church's preservation."—To a church fainting under the bloody persecutions of the world the Seer had announced the great judgments, through which God was going to avenge the blood of his servants on the world, and break its rebelliousness, humble its pride. But out of the consolation itself a new fear arises. The church is still in the world, and must therefore, as it seems, be herself involved in a participation of those frightful judgments. Especially was the representation of the fifth seal fitted to awaken this fear. If all should be convulsed, if the proud trees must fall, under whose shelter men dwell upon earth, there appears no hope of safety even for the elect. A new consolation is brought in here to meet this new temptation. God's protecting hand will be stretched out over his own children even during these frightful plagues, as in former times he delivered Lot from the midst of destruction, as he slew Egypt and spared Goshen; as he gave to Zerubabel the comforting promise, that amid the terrible shakings of the world he would make him as a seal-ring;[1] as in Zech. ix. 8, after a representation of the great judgments with which all the countries around Judah should be visited, and the kingdom brought to nought under whose dominion it then stood (Persia), it is said, "and I make for my house a camp against the invading enemy;

1 Ch. vi. here stands in the same relation to ch. vii. that Hag. ii. 21, 22 ("I shake the heavens and the earth, and overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen," &c.) does to ver. 23, "in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will take thee Zerubabel son of Shealtiel, and will make thee as a seal-ring, for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of Hosts." The remarks made in the Christology there are equally applicable here: "The fundamental idea is God's affectionate guardianship of his people amid all the mighty changes brought by him upon the world, which, just because they are not accidental, but designed by his guidance to exalt his people and kingdom, cannot be injurious to them; so that his people can look with peace and comfort upon the earth's desolations, assured that these are but the way to a better world."

no oppressor shall pass through them any more; for now I see with mine eyes." Jesus Christ had already, during his sojourn on earth, not only guaranteed safety to his disciples under the persecutions they were to experience in the world, but also in the midst of the judgments by which the world was to be visited, Matth. xxiv. 22.

Ch. vii. 1. *And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea nor on any tree.*—The winds in Scripture are the symbol of divine judgments, the storms of suffering and temptation which are appointed by God. In ch. vi. 13, "as a fig-tree casts its unripe fruit, when shaken by a strong wind," the divine judgment was already *compared* to a strong wind. And from that there was but a step to the representation here, where it appears under the *image* of the wind. In Job ix. 17, it is said, "he breaketh me in a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause." In 1 Kings xix. 11, "the great and strong wind, rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the Lord," denotes the storm of assaults and tribulations which befel the church and her representatives, the prophets. The powerful storm out of the north, in Ezekiel, ch. i. 4, symbolises the judgment that was to break in upon Judea out of Babylon. In Jeremiah also, ch. xxii. 22, the judgment of God is represented under the image of the wind. But there are three passages in particular of the Old Testament which serve as a foundation for the one before us. In Jer. xlix. 36, the divine judgments rushing in upon all sides appear as the four winds, "and I bring against Elam the four winds from the four ends of the heaven, and I scatter them toward all the four winds." The winds are introduced here, not as Züllig thinks, for the immediate purpose of scattering, but for that of destroying: the scattering to the four winds is only the consequence of the powerful activity of the winds, as appears plainly from ver. 32, where the "I bring their calamity from all sides" corresponds as to the matter; and also because it is not said, "and the four winds scatter them," but, "I scatter them to all the four winds." So here also the circumstance of the four angels standing with the four winds on the four corners of the earth, indicates that the storms

of the divine judgments were to break in from all sides, and so, in accordance with what was said in the sixth seal, brings out the multifarious nature of the divine judgments, presupposing the greatness of the guilt they were sent to chastise. The second passage is Dan. vii. 2. There the four winds of heaven are let loose upon the great sea, as a description of the divine judgments which were to be executed by the conquerors of the world. The third and last passage is Zech. vi. 1, ss. The prophet sees four chariots. The interpreting angel instructs him regarding the meaning of these in ver. 5, "These are the four winds of heaven, which go forth, after they have appeared ministering before the Lord of the whole earth." The four winds of heaven are used to symbolize the divine judgments. It is on account of their personification that chariots are ascribed to them, and that the chariots in which we must suppose the winds to be carried are afterwards identified with the winds.—The four winds are called the four winds of the earth. *The earth* is wanting in some critical helps, and Bengel would omit it; but, improperly; for, in the fundamental passages, it is not simply the four winds, but the four winds of heaven, that are mentioned; and the omission of *heaven* here is to be accounted for from the *earth* preceding and following, the threefold mention of which is certainly not accidental, but emphatically points to the theatre of the divine judgments.—The four winds are held by four angels. Their chief mission is to let the winds go (comp. on ver. 2), whence it is given to them to hurt the earth and the sea. But along with this they had the charge of restraining the winds for some time longer, till the saints were placed in security, as the angels in Sodom were at once commissioned to destroy the city and to deliver Lot. And this is the only point made prominent here, because it is the only thing of present importance. That the angels are not, as Züllig conceives, the angels of the four winds, but that they are here employed on a special business, is clear from this, that the discourse is not of the four angels, but quite indefinitely of four angels, while it is of *the* four winds. We are not to think, with Bengel, of bad angels. With such the mission would not suit, either to hold the winds for the preservation of the righteous, or to let them loose for the destruction of the wicked. Both belong, according to the doctrine of Scripture, to the good angels—see in

regard to the latter my commentary on Ps. lxxviii. 49.) According to Ex. xii. 13, 23, the slaying of the first-born of Egypt was accomplished by the destroyer, the angel of the Lord with his attendants. According also to ver. 3 of this chapter, the four angels take part in the sealing of the elect.[1] In the angels who hold and let go the winds, the thought that the salvation of the chosen and the destruction of the wicked comes only from God, is clothed, as it were, with flesh and blood[2]—comp. the similar symbolical representation in ch. ix. 14, 15.—The four angels with the four winds make up with the earth, the sea, and the trees, the number seven: in the first group the spoilers, in the second those that were to be spoiled, the *agens* and the *patiens* of the desolation.—The *sea*, according to Dan. vii. 2, can only be the sea of the nations. Of the sea in the literal sense, besides, we cannot think, because that could not be hurt by the winds, as stated in ver. 2. Finally, that the sea and the trees are used figuratively is clear from the position of the trees, which are separated from the earth, to which the natural trees belong, and are placed after the sea.—The *trees* here correspond to the kings, magnates, etc., in ch. vi. 15. Trees and grass in ch. viii. 7, ix. 4, denote the high and the low, princes and subjects. In the Old Testament trees are the common symbol of the great. In Isa. x. 18, 19, the trees of Ashur, in contrast to his brushwood, are his great ones. But especially has this symbol a frequent place in those prophets, with whom St John most closely connected himself, Daniel and Ezekiel. In Dan. iv. Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon appears under the image of a lofty tree: "Thou, O king, art that tree," ver 19. In Ezekiel, ch. xxxi. 3, ss., Assyria is represented as a cedar on Lebanon, beautifully foliaged, its top reaching to the very clouds; in its branches nestled all the fowls of heaven, the beasts of the field bore under its boughs, and many tribes of the earth dwelt beneath its shade. In ch. xvii. also the house of David appears as a high cedar on Lebanon; the trees of the

1 Bengel remarks: "They are bad angels; for good angels, though they do harm, still do no injustice." But *ἀδικεῖν* is used in the sense of doing harm, giving pain, often in the Apocalypse itself, ch. vi. 6, ix. 4. In that sense it must at any rate be taken here, since, even if the angels were bad, the work done by them has nothing in it of injustice; they were certainly instruments of deserved punishment.

2 Vitringa: Qua dictionis formula innuitur, nullos in orbe terrarum motus cieri majores, qui non pendeant a dei consilio.

field (Michaelis: "all princes and potentates of this world") saw its wonderful growth, and perceived from it that it is the Lord who exalts or depresses all trees. The trees of the field, too, in ch xxxi. 4, 5, 15, are the princes of the earth. Comp. besides Jer. xxi. 14, xlvi. 22, 23.—The angels hold the winds that the wind might not blow upon any tree, literally, every tree. And as Züllig remarks, the word *all* or every is not used in vain in the Apocalypse. For the present the winds must blow upon *no* tree; by and bye they must blow upon *all* trees. The hurting of the trees brings injury to those who dwell under their branches; Ez. xxxi. 6, 17, xvii. 23; Matt. xiii. 31, 32. If but a single tree had been hurt before the sealing, the promise which the Lord has given to his people would be broken. For without his protecting grace the fall of that tree would be hurtful to them. Precious privilege of Christians, that they are preserved from the destruction which the fall of the tree brings along with it!

Ver. 2. *And I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, who had the seal of the living God, and cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying,* Ver. 3. *Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*—On the expression "another angel," Bengel remarks: "This was a holy, but a created angel. To such an one alone is the word suitable, which he utters in ver. 3." But this other angel is rather Christ, sent by God the Father as the Saviour and the Comforter of his afflicted church. The "our God" is no objection to that, as Bengel supposes. For Christ also calls God *his* God, John xx. 17; and in Rom. xv. 6, Paul speaks of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.[1] Nor does the epithet *angel* speak against its being Christ. For this denotes not the nature but the mission, which he has in common with the inferior angels. Through the whole of the Old Testament the Logos constantly appears as the angel of the Lord. Christ represents himself as an angel also, in ch. x. 1, and xviii. 1. The reference to Christ is favoured by the absolute authority which this angel exercises over the other angels, and the fundamental passage of Ez. ix., where the righteous are marked by the angel of the Lord, the

1 See on the connection between the full equality of nature and the dependance in Christ, Schmeider über das hohenpriesterliche Gebet, p. 20.

heavenly mediator between God and his people, who presents himself in the garb of the earthly mediator—comp. Lev. xvi. 4, 23. But more especially, and sufficient of itself, indeed, is the proof that is afforded by the circumstance that the angel here ascends from the rising of the sun.[1] Züllig calls it "a circumstance very enigmatical." But it suits only Christ. The sun-rising marks the heavenly region. In the east, where the visible sun goes forth, there was given to the Seer a glorious spectacle, there the spiritual sun ascends the heavens—that is, Christ, as possessor of the glory of God, as which he is also elsewhere in the Revelation and in other parts of Scripture compared to the sun —comp. x. 1, i. 16, John i. 9, where Christ appears as the true light, which enlightens every man, Matt. xvii. 2, and on the sun as a symbol of the glory of the Lord, see on ch. xii. 1. As the rising sun, or the sun going forth in the height, Christ was spoken of by Zecharias in Luke i. 78. The wonderful mercy of God celebrated by him, "through which the rising from on high has visited us, and he has appeared to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death," makes itself known here anew by a visitation, which he accomplishes for his people in the immediate prospect of the troubles that threatened them. The sun is brought into view here as the source of vivifying and refreshing power, Christ as the Saviour and helper of his people. The angel, who ascends as the spiritual sun, forms a contrast to the angels with the four winds. As these announce storms of sufferings and tribulations, so the lovely image of the sun promises salvation and refreshment to those who stand under his grace. The original passage for the representation here (as also for Luke i. 78, where it is combined with Isa. ix. 1), is Mal. iii. 20, "And to you that fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, and salvation is under his wings." The sun there is primarily righteousness itself, or salvation as a matter-of-fact justification and manifestation of righteousness. But He, through whom the righteousness was to be imparted to the Lord's people, with whose appearance righteousness was to arise on them as the sun, is, according to ch. iii. 1, the angel of the Lord, the heavenly mediator of the covenant, who makes good his threatenings and promises. So that

1 Bengel: "Elsewhere the angels come down from heaven, ch. x. 1, xviii. 1, xx. 1, But here an angel goes forth from the horizon, as the sun in his course."

the view of the church, which understands Christ by the sun, is perfectly correct in the main, as he also is in reality the light that arises on those who dwell in the land of darkness like the shadow of death. (See the Christology on the passage.) Amid the anxieties and fears which are apt to be occasioned by the thought of the heavy judgments that God brings on a guilty world, let us never lose sight of this comforting image of the angel that ascends from the rising of the sun.—The angel has the seal of the living God that he might seal with it the servants of God in their foreheads. The original passage is Ez. ix. 4, where the Lord says to the person clothed in linen, "Thou shalt set a mark upon the foreheads of the men, who sigh and cry over all the abominations which are done in the midst of them." In the midst of the six angels, who were sent for judgment against the ungodly Jerusalem, or the world in the church, a man appeared clothed in linen, with an inkhorn on his thigh, the angel of the Lord (see Christology on the passage for the proof), who receives from God a charge to go through the city, and mark the elect. It was a symbolical representation of the truth, most consolatory to the true people of God, ready to faint under the thought of God's impending judgments, that in the midst of these the protecting hand of his grace would be upon them, that they should not be swept away for the iniquities of the city, and that, just as he knew how to reserve the wicked to the day of judgment, so also did he know how to deliver the godly out of temptation (2 Pet. ii. 10.) This assurance of an actual preservation was verified, for example, in the deliverance of Jeremiah, and in that of Ebed-Melech, to whom the Lord said by Jeremiah, ch. xxxix. 16—18, "Behold I will bring my words upon this city for evil and not for good, and thou shalt see it in that day. But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord, and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid. For, I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord." To the inkhorn in Ezekiel corresponds the seal of God here, and to the mark in the one place, the impress of the seal in the other. —In common life things are sealed for a double purpose—either to make them inaccessible and lay them under seal, Matt. xxvii. 66, or to confirm them. And accordingly in Scripture there is a double import in the figurative and symbolical use of sealing.

The latter of the two kinds is referred to in the passages, John iii. 33, vi. 27; Rom. iv. 11; 1 Cor. ix. 2; 2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13. *Here* the sense of confirming is the more suitable, as it was not by the sealing that persons could be first made servants of God; they could only be recognised and outwardly represented as such; whence also the seal was to be impressed on their foreheads, the place where it could be most easily seen. He that is sealed is confirmed in his position as the servant of God, and is thereby made secure against the calamities, which can only alight on the children of this world. God gives them in respect to the matter a letter and seal, that they are his servants. Bengel understands the sealing otherwise: "Where there is any thing that belongs to a prince's establishment, where the royal arms are imprinted on plate, or where a seal of that sort is impressed on a writing, there must no one lay hold of the object. Now, what belongs to the great God, that remains untouched. If any one would appropriate it to himself, he must again be deprived of it." Harless gives the same view of the sealing on Eph. i. 13, "The impress of the seal marks the certainty, that what is stamped with it belongs in some respect to the possessor of the seal. In what particular respect the seal does not indicate." But the use of sealing as a mark of property is without any certain example in Scripture.—According to the opinion of many expositors, the name of Jehovah must have been on the seal. They rest on ch. xiv. 1, where the elect are said to have the name of God on their foreheads. But that name there denotes their character as servants of God, which belonged to them before the sealing here, and which was the foundation of the sealing. Nor must we lay stress on the circumstance, that in the East the seal commonly bears the name of its possessor. For, the custom is still not so common there, that it might be understood of itself, and in that case it would have required here to be expressly mentioned. But it is carefully to be noted, that even in Ezekiel a mark is spoken of quite generally, without any more immediate description of the sort of mark. For that reason alone we must here not go beyond what is expressly written. Nothing depends on what might be on the seal, but simply, that it was the seal of God.—The seal is described as that of the *living* God. The same thing is implied here as in the original passage, Ps. xlii. 2, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God," where I remarked in my Commentary,

" the Psalmist's God is not a phantom, which, itself dead, is also incapable of imparting life ; he is the living, and consequently the life-giving; comp. the corresponding phrase, ' the God of my life in ver. 8, rich in salvation for his people.' " See on ch. i. 18.— The loud voice proclaims the determined and absolute will; comp. John xi. 43, where Jesus cried with a loud voice, " Lazarus come forth." Bengel interprets differently : " The loud cry indicates, that the four angels were already about to make a commencement of the work of desolation. If something is ready to be done, and we would fain arrest it, we then raise our voice."—Instead of: until we have sealed, Luther has : until we seal, following the not sufficiently established reading of *σφραγίζωμεν*. Since no others are mentioned as being present in the scene, the *we* is most simply explained by : *I and you*. This mode of explaining it can only be objected to, if by the four angels *bad* angels are understood. " Bad angels," Bengel says on this false supposition, " are also indeed in the power of God the Almighty ; but no one of them can say, My God ; and neither could any good angel say in fellowship with the bad, Our God." We may be the less surprised to find the four angels here represented as taking part in the work of sealing, since not only was it given to them in ver. 2 to hurt the earth and the sea, but also, according to ver. 1, for the sake of the elect to hold the four winds of the earth. The analogy, too, of the fundamental passage is in favour of this view. In Ez. ix. we find no appearance of any one beside the six angels, who were sent to execute God's judgments, and the person in linen clothing who was to mark the elect. The last, however, is the leader of the whole party, as appears from this, that thus only is the number *seven* completed, and that he stands in the midst, while the others follow him. That the person clothed in linen appears also at the (desecrated) altar, indicates that he too had a part in the execution of judgment ; comp. viii. 5, Am. ix. 1. We are not, however, to conclude from the *we* with Züllig : " Hence these others also must have had the seal of the living God, not the person alone who spake." But it is against this, that only one seal of the living God is named ; and also the analogy of Ezekiel, according to whom the marking was performed merely by the person who was clothed in linen. The works of judgment and preservation were so distributed, that the first was executed by the

four angels, and the second by the other angel. The two, however, still formed a common work. The four angels so far took part in the sealing, that they held the winds till it was completed, and gave to it their cordial concurrence and joyful assistance. And the judgment again was executed under the auspices of the other angel; the four angels were but the instruments of the wrath of the Lamb, ch. vi. 16.—Bengel remarks: "The hurting lasts for a long time, and so also does the work of sealing, which is perpetually in progress. Whenever a paroxysm of hurting breaks forth, the servants of God also are preserved, for whom it then becomes necessary, until they are placed in perfect security on Mount Zion, ch. xiv. 1." But in this it is not properly distinguished between the symbol and the fact indicated thereby; and what belongs only to the latter is transferred to the former. The sealing as a symbolical act was accomplished in a single period of time; it was done once for all before the commencement of the plagues, by which the ungodly world was to be judged. But the simple idea is, that amid all the judgments which befal the world for its sins, God protects his own people.—The sealing refers to the entire duration of the Christian church, even to its final completion; to the entire duration of the world, even to its final destruction. Therefore, it has not yet lost its significance. And for the present time in particular it is full of consolation, as the sixth seal is beginning to be realized anew in a manner never seen before.

Ver. 4. *And I heard the number of those who were sealed, an hundred and forty and four thousand, that were sealed out of all the tribes of the children of Israel.* The act of sealing is not expressly reported to have been brought to a close, but the Seer passes on abruptly to what presupposes it to have been actually finished. The "I heard" is particularly to be noted. Zullig: "The number is too great for the Seer to have ascertained it by his own reckoning, and yet it must be a quite definite number. Hence he aptly feigns (!) that he heard it announced." The "I heard" here coincides with the great multitude, which no one could number," in ver. 9, and disproves the opinion of those who, because a determinate number is mentioned here, while there the (relative) innumerableness is spoken of, would conclude that in the latter passage a different company is

meant.—That the number 144,000 has not a statistical, but a purely theological value, is evident from the way it is made up. A great multitude of believers, that no one can number, could not be more appropriately indicated than by this number. Twelve is the signature of the church (see my Commentary on Balaam, p. 72), and as such is often used in this book itself—comp. ch. xii. 1, where the woman, who represents the church, has a crown of twelve stars, xxi. 12, where the city has twelve gates, xxi. 14, where the walls of the city have twelve foundations, xxi. 16, 17, the four and twenty elders. In its simplest and most elementary form, this number presents itself in the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles, the two sources of the stream of the church. The idea of "the great multitude" of believers is expressed thus: the fundamental number is multiplied by itself, as in xxi. 17, and then by thousands, as in xxi. 16. While Bengel is here at great pains to rescue the definite number, because with the recognition of the truth here light falls also upon other numbers of the Revelation—those numbers, which lie at the bottom of his castle in the air, his apocalyptic chronology—Bossuet clearly perceived the right view, and distinctly announced it. He says, "This passage alone ought to make it manifest, how greatly they deceive themselves, who would always apprehend an exact and definite number in the numbers of the Apocalypse. For, can it be imagined, that there was precisely in each tribe twelve thousand elect, neither more nor less, to make up this total number of 144,000? It is not by such minutiae, nor with such scrupulous littleness of spirit, that the sacred oracles should be explained. It is necessary to understand in the numbers of the Apocalypse a certain mystical reason, to which the Holy Spirit seeks to draw our attention. The mystery, which we are to learn here, is, that the number twelve, sacred in the synagogue and in the church, because of the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles, is multiplied by itself, in order to make twelve thousand in each tribe, and twelve times twelve thousand in all the tribes together, that we might perceive the faith of patriarchs and of apostles multiplied in their successors; and in the solidity of a number so perfectly square, the eternal immutability of the truth of God and of his apostles." If the number is rightly understood, all such questions, as whether the 144,000 are so many individual

souls, or whether so many men belong to them, fall entirely into abeyance.—The same 144,000, whose preservation amid the plagues that were to come upon the earth is here represented, meet us again in ch. xiv. 1, 3, in their state of heavenly glory; substantially also here in the same state, in ver. 9, ss., only that the number is not expressly repeated. Both the preservation and the glory are at the same time pledged to the true members of the church, and besides these a third, citizenship in the New Jerusalem.—The sealed are *out of all the tribes of the children of Israel.* It is no contradiction to this, that Dan is not named in the following enumeration; the omission merely shows, that according to the Seer's point of view Dan was excluded from the number of the tribes of Israel. But this very omission of the tribe of Dan is a proof that the Seer spake of the tribes of the children of Israel, not in a Jewish, but in an Israelitish-Christian sense. In the sacred books of the Old Testament the wicked appear, in spite of their fleshly descent from Jacob, as cut off from their people. But, on the other hand, native heathens, under certain restrictions, were on account of their faith naturalized in Israel; and the prophets announced, that one day these restrictions were to be abolished, and the naturalization of believing heathen, going hand in hand with the exclusion of the false seed, shall proceed with great rapidity. So, for example, Isaiah in ch. lvi. 6, 7, and Ezekiel in ch. xlvii. 22, 23, "And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it (the land) by lot for an inheritance among you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, who shall beget children among you; and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord God." Michaelis: "The distinction of races which existed under the Old Covenant shall be abolished;" see also Hävernick on the passage. Now that Israel and his tribes are mentioned here in this sense, that the Christian church is what is meant by them, as being the legitimate continuation of ancient Israel, not only appears from the omission already referred to of the tribe of Dan, and from the equality of the numbers in the small and the great tribes, but will also be still farther proved at ch. xi. from

the effacing there of all tribe-distinctions. Those who with Bengel hold stiffly to the point, that Israel is here spoken of in the natural sense, entangle themselves in the difficulty, that the Jewish Christians, to whom by their view the promise exclusively belongs, cannot possibly be separated from the others. Bengel himself says: "With the Jews, who for so long a period have assumed, whether willingly or by constraint, the Christian name, circumcision has been renounced, and the multitudes of their descendants have become intermingled with the heathen, so that it is impossible for us to know who among us may have derived our descent from Jews or heathen; as, on the other hand, a Jew does not know whether he may not have partly sprung from a proselyte." Besides, the following argument is irresistible: the plagues, against which the sealing brings security, pass over the whole earth, threaten alike all who, according to ch. v. 9, 10, have been redeemed by the blood of Christ out of every kindred and tongue, people and nation, and made kings and priests to their God; not a word being said as to any separate division of Jewish Christians. But how unlikely is it that the Seer should have obtained consolation only for a part of those that were in danger! What should fill all with anxiety required to be met with consolation for all; and so, according to ver. 3, the servants of God generally must be sealed. To understand by these simply the Jewish Christians, is the greatest arbitrariness. Bengel says: "As certainly as the tribe of Judah is that from which the victorious Lion, the Lamb, sprung (ch. v. 5), so certainly are all the tribes here to be literally understood." But the question is not whether literally or non-literally; but whether with the inclusion or the exclusion of the adopted children, who through faith have become incorporated? And the former has on its side the analogy among Israel of the excision of the false seed, the entire omission of Dan, and the circumstance that in the rest it is not the whole tribes that are sealed, but only a limited number out of each. Besides, though the tribes were to be understood literally, the enumeration of the particular tribes could still have only an ideal import. They serve merely to embody the thought that the preservation shall extend alike to all parts of the church. This results simply from the consideration that at the time the Apocalypse was composed, the distinction of tribes had already

in great part vanished, then from the omission of one whole tribe, which could never have taken place if a real numbering had been meant, further from the absolute equality of the numbers obtained from the small and the great alike, &c.—Ewald admits that it is not Jewish Christians specially who are spoken of, but the whole Christian church; in the transference, however, of the name of Israel to Christians, he conceives he finds a proof of the Judaizing disposition of the author. But if a fault were really to be discovered in this, it must necessarily be a quite common one (Ewald would ascribe it to the author of the Revelation in contrast to Paul and John); since the Saviour himself took the lead in designating his church by the name of Israel, Matth. xix. 28, and chose his apostles with a respect to the number of the tribes of Israel; comp. the introductory investigations to ch. xi. The name arose out of a consideration of the continuity of the church, which doubtless cannot but look very strange to an age that has been so much accustomed to tear asunder the Old and New Testaments from each other.

Ver. 5. *Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.* Ver. 6. *Of the tribe of Asher were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Naphthali were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Manasseh were sealed twelve thousand.* Ver. 7. *Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.* Ver. 8. *Of the tribe of Zebulon were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.*—The tribes are united in pairs together. Bengel: "It was after Luther's death that the Bible was divided into verses as we now find it, and there in each verse we have three tribes, which does not make a suitable arrangement." In regard to the reason for the pair-like arrangement, Züllig remarks: "The birth determines the order in the eight last, four closely related brotherly pairs after their mothers. It only required the two leaders Judah and Reuben to be placed beside each other, and then with Simeon and Levi, who were in other respects closely connected (comp. Gen. xlix. 5—7, where they stand in juxtaposition), there just remained one pair

more." Precisely as the tribes here, the apostles are arranged in pairs, Matt. x. 2, ss., and for similar reasons; at the head stand two pairs of brothers, and with an express reference to this relationship. The other points which this list presents for notice are the following :—1. The tribe Dan is omitted. Several, indeed, have tried to save themselves the trouble of explaining this omission by getting rid of the fact. Thus Züllig remarks: "In all manuscripts and editions Manasseh stands instead of Dan. And Irenaeus in his early age knew no variation. But even if the author himself may have written it so, we must hold him to have written wrong, and affirm it ought to have been Dan; so overwhelming here are the considerations of the higher criticism." But such a procedure condemns itself; in no book are we less warranted in employing a superficial, "It must be so," in order to change the text. Nor must the reason of the peculiarity be sought in the difficulty, which presented itself to the Seer, in his being obliged not to overstep the number twelve, because this was the signature of the church, while the tribes were thirteen. To meet this no heroic effort was needed. The prophet only required to comprehend the two tribes Ephraim and Manasseh, under the name of Joseph, which might the more readily have occurred, as Ezekiel, ch. xlviii. 32, had already by this means reduced the number to twelve. He must, therefore, have had an important special reason for leaving out the tribe of Dan; and this could only be a theological one. We find the key in such passages as ch. xiv. 4, where it is said of the hundred, forty, and four thousand, who had been redeemed from the earth, from the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, "These are they who have not defiled themselves with women (*i.e.* sins), for they are virgins;" ch. xxi. 27, "And nothing that is common shall enter therein, and that worketh abomination and lies," ch. xxii. 14. Almost the only remarkable fact which is to be found in the history of the Danites is, that after having got possession of the land, they introduced into their territory a false worship (Judges xviii.), which continued through centuries. On this account did Ezekiel, ch. xlviii., in determining the respective positions of the tribes, assign the most remote place on the north to Dan, at the farthest distance from the sanctuary, to which Judah immediately adjoined. John only proceeds a step farther, and excludes Dan al-

together. There he stands in the limits of the world, here his place is not found in it at all. This explanation of the fact is also confirmed by the analogy of the substitution of the name of Joseph for Ephraim, and by the corresponding fact in the history of the apostles, from which the name of Judas Iscariot was dropt out because of his apostacy. 2. Instead of Ephraim stands Joseph, after Manasseh, the other son of Joseph, had been named. This, too, must have a deep ground. For it is without example elsewhere to find one of the two tribes, that sprung from him, designated by his name in contradistinction to the other. Numb. xiii. 11 cannot be referred to as in point. For, there it is said, "Of the tribe of Joseph (as a second deputy, beside that of Ephraim) of the tribe of Manasseh." But here Joseph is exactly substituted for Ephraim. We shall perceive the reason of the fact if we take a glance at the history. The Ephraimite Micah had first, according to Judges xvii., set up the false worship, which afterwards passed over to the Danites. Through the whole period of the Judges the sons of Ephraim had shown themselves to be "deceitful bowmen, who turned back in the day of battle," Ps. lxxviii. 9 (see my Commentary); they afterwards set themselves against the sanctuary in Zion, and against the dominion of David's house and line; they were the authors of the lamentable division which inflicted on the people of Israel a deadly wound. By all which they had rendered their name an offence. In its room, therefore, that of Joseph is put, the sacred remembrance of which was a security, that the tribe of Ephraim should not, like the tribe of Dan, suffer the fate of an entire extinction. 3. Judah, who, according to the order of birth, was the fourth among the sons of Leah, stands here at the head, and has precedence of Reuben, the first-born. The reason of this is given in Heb. vii. 14, "For it is manifest that our Lord sprang from Judah;" and may also be learnt from this book, where Christ is called the lion of the tribe of Judah. Even under the Old Testament this tribe was distinguished, by the promises he obtained with reference to this, from the lips of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 10, and from the prophet Nathan, who announced to David the perpetual dominion of his line, and consequently that of Judah. 4. Levi, who had in the blessing of Moses been so nobly distinguished with privilege, and placed immediately after Judah, here again descends from the elevation he had already reached. He is mixed up with the others without the

appearance of any superiority. Bengel: "After the Levitical ceremonies were abolished, Levi found himself again on a level with his brethren. All now are priests, all have access, not one through another, but one with another. Levi was chosen of old for the public ministrations of the sanctuary, and the priesthood in particular was given to Aaron and his posterity; but in the New Testament such shadow-work is passed away, and Levi hence became as one of the other tribes." This entire assimilation of Levi to the rest, shows that the precedence of Judah rested on nothing but its relation to Christ, that whatever else distinguished it does not come into notice here, and also shows how far they are from the mind of John, who suppose him to have given the pre-eminence to Jewish Christians. What this presupposed, belonged to the same line as the prerogatives of Levi. We cannot at once take away the old distinctions *within* Judaism, and still retain the boundaries between Jewish and heathenish origin. Has Levi no peculiar place, then the word "there is neither Jew, nor Greek, nor Gentile," has assuredly entered. 5. The foundation of the arrangement of the tribes stands in the order of the birth of the sons of Jacob. But there is a series of departures from this, which as a whole are ruled by one principle —namely this, that in the kingdom of Christ difference of birth, external privilege avails nothing; the same principle, on which the doctrine of Paul in Eph. iii. 6 rests, "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by his Gospel." To facilitate a survey of the matter, we shall set down here (after Züllig) the order of birth, and that of the Apocalypse after each other.

Order of Birth:

Of Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah.
Of Bilhah: Dan, Napthali.
Of Zilpah: Gad, Asher.
Of Leah again: Issachar, Zebulon.
Of Rachel: Joseph, Benjamin.

Order of the Apocalypse:

Of Leah: Judah, Reuben.
Of Zilpah: Gad, Asher.
Of Bilhah and Rachel: Naphthali, Manasseh.

Of Leah again from her earlier sons : Simeon, Levi.
Of Leah the two last-born : Issachar, Zebulon.
Of Rachel : Joseph, Benjamin.

" Whoever," remarks Züllig, " has but a moderate acquaintance with the spirit of order that prevailed with the author of the Apocalypse, he can have no doubt that these transpositions were not arbitrary, but were well weighed ; consequently, that under this apparent want of order a real order, though probably of a very artificial kind, lay hidden." On nearer consideration this order cannot escape us. There is found a complete intermingling of the sons of the different women, and in particular of the sons of the maids with those of the proper wives. Of the four first sons of Leah two are separated, Simeon and Levi, and in the middle, between them and the other two—Judah and Reuben—are placed the sons of the concubines. But thus only the sons of the *one* wife were placed on a level with the sons of the concubines. And the same thing was effected in regard to the sons also of Rachel, by putting Manasseh, who was descended from Rachel, in the room of Dan, and combining him into a pair with Naphthali. (It does not stand : Manasseh, Naphthali, as it would have been Dan, Naphthli ; because Manasseh, and not Naphthali is the name shoved in ; Manasseh was assigned as an accompaniment to Naphthali.) By this method also the aim is accomplished of placing the sons of Rachel, the humanly beloved, on a footing of equality with the sons of Leah, who was hated. Manasseh stands in the middle of the sons of Leah.[1] It only further remains to be asked, why the order of the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah should have been reversed. The answer is, because the equalization with the sons of Leah, who open the series, must first be attained, and one of the sons of Bilhah is extruded, in order to make room for the son of Rachel.

If there could be any doubt as to the correctness of the solution now given, it would be removed by comparing the parallel passages in Ezekiel. In the two enumerations also of the sons of Jacob, which are given by him in ch. xlviii., the whole arrange-

1 If any doubt might still exist as to the genuineness of the reading Manasseh, it would be completely removed by this collocation.

ment is theologically constructed, and pervaded by the same principle. There is found an intentional intermingling of the sons of the maid-servants and the wives, and of the latter again among each other, in ch. xlviii. 31—34. Thus Dan stands in the middle between Benjamin, the son of Rachel, and Simeon, the son of Leah. The latter is separated from his natural companion Levi, and is brought in after the sons of Rachel, and after Dan. Three sons of Leah take the lead, three receive the third place, and the conclusion is formed by three sons of the bond-maids. In the second place are two sons of Rachel, and a son of a bond-maid. So that all birth-prerogatives are broken through. Naphthali must conclude the whole, and give precedence to the sons of Zilpah, because Bilhah's posterity had already attained to honour through the advancement of Dan. In ch. xlviii. 1—7 and 23—29, the tribes are divided into two groups, the one of seven, and the other of five, a division of the twelve, which we often meet with in the arrangements of the Psalms. In the middle of the two groups is the sanctuary. The first group is closed by Judah, the second commenced by Benjamin, so that the nearest to the sanctuary are the two tribes, which remained true after the apostacy of Israel—(Benjamin certainly but in part.) Three pairs precede Judah, two follow Benjamin. First, a son of Bilhah and one of Zilpah are paired, Dan and Asher. Then a son of Bilhah and one of Rachel, Naphthali, Manasseh (just as here.) Next a son of Rachel and one of Leah, Ephraim and Reuben. Finally, a son of Leah and Zilpath, Zebulon and Gad. Only *one* pair of sons of *one* mother is to be found, Simeon and Issachar; which could not be avoided, because the number of the sons of Leah was a preponderating one. But the object was already fully accomplished.—We close the exposition of this section with the words of Bengel: "The Lord knows them that are his. Oh! it is good to serve the Lord. In peaceful times, when matters go well, and there is a fair wind, one is not so deeply sensible of this, nor is a special preservation so needful. But when bad angels step forth (or rather, times of tribulation and chastisement arise), then does the divine election form a blessed feature in the condition of those who are under the protection of the Almighty."

Vers. 9—17. In the midst of the plagues, which are destined to befal the world, the elect were assured of safety in the preceding context. But this can still only preserve them from the worst. It is impossible to be happy amid the desolations of a falling world. That the execution of judgment on the world must bring heavy troubles on the Lord's people, in the first instance in the catastrophe of Judea, which John saw lying behind him, was plainly implied in the words of our Lord in Matth. xxiv. 19—22. And how, indeed, can it be otherwise, since the guilt of the world is nothing absolutely foreign to them, since they have themselves to struggle with the sin which reigns in the world, and since they also so far need the sufferings, which fall with a destructive severity on the world, that through these they are tried and purified, and withdrawn from an undue love to the world. So, then, a new consolation is still required for believers, and this is furnished in the section before us. The good reaches its end. Those who were before assured of preservation amid the judgments that are decreed against the world, are here presented before us in that heavenly glory which awaited them. If they have in many respects to suffer here with the world, what boots it? since the white garments, and the palms, and the waters of life, are sure to them.

Ver. 9. *After these things I saw, and behold! a great multitude, which no one could number, of every nation, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands.* The multitude that no one could number is a characteristic description of Israel, or the church—comp. Gen. xiii. 16, xv. 5; Num. xxiii. 10. Such a description alone shows that it is not simply heathen Christians who are here spoken of, in contradistinction to the Jewish ones, of whom mention was made in vers. 1—8. The note here that they could not be numbered is equivalent to the express designation as Israel there. It is to be observed that it is not the absolute, but only the relative innumerableness that is affirmed: a great multitude, which *no one* can number; as also in ver. 4, the Seer *hears* the number of the sealed, because he himself could not number them. Bengel remarks that "the sealed were a great number, and the number of angels in ch. v. 11 was still greater, and of the horsemen in ch. ix. 16,

where there were hundreds of millions; still these companies were capable of being numbered; but the one before us could neither John nor any one number." This overlooking, however, of what has been stated above, and magnifying the numbers here to something beyond all bounds, proceeds on the error of departing from the scriptural mode of contemplating the conditions of blessedness, and adopting that of the world, which would have all to be blessed. Bengel refutes himself, when he remarks, "it is elsewhere stated in Scripture that those who pass through the wide gate into destruction are many, but few comparatively who find the strait gate and enter by the narrow way into life."—In respect to the words: out of every nation, &c., see on ch. v. 9.[1]—On the *white robes* as the symbol of glory, see on ch. vi. 11. The angel also, in Mark xvi. 5, was arrayed in white clothing, and possibly the literal agreement of the expression was not accidental, and was intended to intimate, that believers when made perfect shall be "like the angels in heaven," Matth. xxii. 30. Their standing designation, the saints, that is, the exalted, the glorious, expresses the substance of what is symbolically indicated by the white clothing.[2] The *palms* in the hands of the elect are, in the opinion of many, palms of *victory*. But when one reads in Ewald, "After having patiently endured they bear palms like conquerors in the Olympic games," we can scarcely fail to feel distrustful of such an exposition. A reference to the Olympic games is something quite out of place; nor is there in the whole of Revelation a single well cer-

1 Bengel noticed as remarkable the singular ἔθνους in connection with the following plurals, but was not fortunate in the explanation of it. In the use of ἔθνος the plural was avoided, because both in the New Testament generally and in the Apocalypse (comp. ii. 26, xi. 2, 18) it is usually employed as a designation of the heathen. But here the nations generally must be meant. It differs so far from λαός that it is the lowest name, and designates the peoples merely as masses, corresponding to the Hebr. עַמִּים, whereas λαός denotes them after the organism which unites them together. Because this organism in so far as it arises in a natural way, is of a very imperfect kind, so there is, till Christ's coming, strictly speaking, but *one* people—that of God; comp. Deut. xxxii. 21, where the heathen are marked as no people, לֹא עַם, with iv. 7, 8, "what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God?" &c.

2 In regard to the reading Bengel remarks: "Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ ὄχλος πολὺς—ἑστῶτες—περιβεβλημένους, a middle reading, whence some reduce the whole period to the nominative, others to the accusative. The mixture of cases displeases Wolf, as frequently, indeed, happens in this book." The accusative περιβεβλημένους is governed by εἶδον, which comes forth here from behind the ἰδοὺ, as also in ch. iv. 4 the accusative depends on the omitted εἶδον.

tified example of such a transition to the territory of heathen symbols. But, besides, the palms as signs of victory accord ill at ver. 10, where the subject of discourse is not of what the elect had *done*, nor generally, indeed, throughout the section, but only of what they had *been*. The discourse that follows speaks not of victory, but of salvation. The palms as symbolical of victory would ascribe to the redeemed an activity, which is out of place here, where all is designed to celebrate the surpassing grace of a redeeming God. Finally, if the palms were those of victory, the white robes would not alone be mentioned in ver. 13. This shows that the palms have not, like the white garments, an objective meaning. The palms are beyond doubt those of the feast of tabernacles. According to Lev. xxiii. 40, the children of Israel at this festival were to bring green branches of palms, and take other trees, and rejoice before the Lord seven days. The latter words point to the import of the rite. It was an expression of joy, the feast of tabernacles being pre-eminently a feast of joy—comp. Deut. xvi. 14, 15. The immediate occasion of this joy was the prosperously concluded harvest; comp. Isa. ix. 2, where the joy of harvest is spoken of as joy of the highest kind. In ver. 39 it is said before, "when ye have gathered in the produce of the land." This object of the joy was represented through the fruits, which were to be used along with the green branches, and which are named before them. As these stood related in the Mosaic law to the green branches, so here the white robes; and in this we have an explanation of the circumstance, that the latter alone are mentioned in ver. 13. The meaning of the green branches remains the same, whether we suppose with the Jewish tradition, that during the feast they were borne in the hand, or with Bähr (Symbolik II. p. 625), and others, that the Israelites adorned their tabernacles with them. This last is certainly what was done with them in the time of Nehemiah (ch. viii. 15—from which passage, however, it cannot be proved that the branches were not, at the same time, carried in the hand.) The green twigs of trees, which have the freshest and thickest foliage, are always an expression of joy. Such we must maintain to be the case, unless we would tear asunder the passage before us from that of John xii. 12, 13, which is very closely connected with it;

"On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him, and cried: Hosanna! Blessed is the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." If by the palms we understand the palms of joy, the symbolical acknowledgment of the salvation which is certified by the name Jesus, the two passages agree harmoniously together. As the people formerly expressed through this symbol their salvation-joy, when Jesus, the Saviour, rode into the earthly Jerusalem, so now do the elect, when they are in the heavenly Zion with Christ, comp. ch. xiv. 1.[1] The green branches cannot be regarded as means simply for the construction of the booths (the materials for which are left quite indefinite), because they are mentioned in the law of Moses without any respect to the booths, which only come to be noticed at a later period, and also because of the connection in which the feast stood with the people's rejoicing. But the truth is, that nothing precisely is determined in the Mosaic law as to the application of the green branches. The main thing was that they were there. They were merely ordered to be *taken*. But the order prescribed in the law rendered it very natural for the people not to satisfy themselves with a simple employment of the branches about the booths. Their independent signification would in that case have readily fallen into the shade. That the custom of bearing the palms in the hand had at any rate become common before the period at which the Apocalypse was written is certain from 2 Macc. x. 7, where it is said of the celebration of the feast of tabernacles after the temple had been consecrated, "And they bare branches and fair boughs, and palms also, and sang psalms unto him that had given them good success in cleansing his place," where, also, the bearing of the palm branches was an expression of joy for the deliverance that had been obtained. It is further evident from Jos. Ant. B. XIII. 13, § 5, and from the passage before us itself, as soon as it is admitted that the palms are the palms of the feast of tabernacles. And that they really were so we can the less doubt, as several of the traits also

1 The word φοίνικες occurs no where else in the New Testament but in these two passages (Mark xi. 8 uses στοιβάδας for τὰ βαΐα τῶν φοινίκων.) But we can perceive here also the difference between the historical and the poetical style. In the Gospel John speaks of palm-branches, here of palms.

in what follows point to a heavenly celebration of the feast of tabernacles; comp. ver. 15, where allusion is made to the *booths;* ver. 16, where the notes given of the misery from which the redeemed had been taken, are derived from the leading features of the distressed condition that belonged to Israel in the literal wilderness; ver. 17, where there seems to be a reference to the rite of pouring out water at the feast of tabernacles. The expression: and palms in their hands, cannot but remind one of the Jewish tradition, according to which every Israelite carried a bunch of green branches in his right hand and an apple in the left.—From the preceding remarks we have before us a celebration of the feast of tabernacles in heaven. There is the less reason for controverting such a view, as an ideal keeping of the feast of tabernacles occurs even in the Old Testament. Zechariah, in ch. xiv. 16, makes the converted heathen in Messiah's time repair to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of tabernacles in gratitude to God for his having graciously led them through the wilderness, and for the blessings of salvation conferred upon them (see Christology on the passage.) The feast of tabernacles, according to its double signification, the historical and the natural, was admirably fitted for serving as a type of this heavenly solemnity. As regards the first, the feast was, according to Lev. xxiii. 43, a feast of thanksgiving for the Lord's gracious preservation experienced by Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness, which alone prevented the people from being destroyed by the dangers that surrounded them, and purified them for the possession of the land of Cannan. The antitype of the festival in this respect is kept by those who, after having escaped the troubles and dangers of their pilgrimage through the wilderness of life, have reached the heavenly Canaan, the place of their rest, where they shall never hunger any more nor thirst any more, and the sun shall not light on them or any heat. In regard to the natural signification of the symbol, Bähr remarks, "With the feast of tabernacles all field-labour ceased, and winter, the period of rest, began. Every one saw himself recompensed for the labours of the year, his cares were gone, the whole fulness of the divine blessing was in the hands of all. No time of the year was so appropriate for joy and rejoicing." The application to the heavenly harvest-feast, when the elect rest from their labours and their works follow them, when they shall

be accredited for what they have here wrought in the sweat of their brow, and what God's blessing conferred on them, is clear as day. What Bähr also says, p. 658, on the connection between the two aspects of the feast, the natural and the historical, equally applies to the antitypical festival: "After having gathered in the whole produce of the field, the agricultural people found themselves at the end of their annual labours and occupations, were in possession of the promised and expected blessing, felt rewarded for all the trouble and the faith with which they had sown their seed in hope, and could now enjoy their rest. No time, certainly, could be more appropriate than that to remind them of the finished toil connected with their wanderings in the wilderness, of the time when their fidelity was proved, of the great act of divine beneficence in giving them possession of the promised land, where also they found rest from battle." The Israelite in his pains and labour on the earth, which the Lord has cursed, consoled himself by a glance toward the joyful day, when before the earthly sanctuary he should bear palms in his hands. May *we* find consolation during our time of pilgrimage upon earth, by casting our eye on the heavenly palms.

Ver. 10. *And they cried with a loud voice and said: The salvation to our God, who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!* In the words of the thanksgiving of the redeemed, there is an allusion to Ps. iii. 8, "Salvation is the Lord's," *q.d.*, he is the possessor and sole dispenser of it; "over thy people thy blessing." What there forms the foundation of the prayer is turned here into a thanksgiving. Luther has rendered improperly: Salvation be to, etc., instead of: *the* salvation. Bengel: "That they had been delivered out of all danger and distress, and were now in the enjoyment of blessing, for this they gave thanks aloud to God and to the Lamb. Our God, said they, who sits upon the throne, has given us salvation, and we have to thank his love entirely for it, and that for ever. The Lamb has purchased for us the salvation, and bestows it on us. Christ Jesus is our salvation (Joshua): therefore do we praise his inconceivably great and wonderful love for ever.—Salvation or blessedness is something precious. The word properly signifies deliverance and freedom from all mischief and adversity: but along with this there is also an overflowing of joy and glory. Both are expressed together,

2 Tim. ii. 10—Now, when a soul passing from this world is introduced into that other, this is in a manner the first cry that it raises there: the salvation be to our God and the Lamb." The salvation forms the contrast to the great tribulation, out of which, according to ver. 14, they have been taken. Allusion is made to the name of Jesus, as also in Matth. xxi. 9, where the multitudes exclaim at the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, "Hosanna to the Son of David;" let his name, Jesus, be verified, let there be salvation to him, and through him, to us. Here the redeemed give thanks for the keeping of the name, for the accomplishment of the salvation. There also He, who sits upon the throne, appears as the ultimate author of salvation: Hosanna in the highest, help us, thou who art enthroned in heaven, through him in whom thou hast laid up the treasures of salvation. The hosanna is now changed into a hallelujah. It had even then a hallelujah in the background. For the cry for help rests on the confidence that he will help. An allusion to the common hosanna-cry at the feast of tabernacles is more doubtful. But at any rate, Ps. cxviii. 25, the place whence that cry was borrowed, and which was wont to be repeated at the feast of tabernacles, "Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity," has finally passed into fulfilment in the case of these redeemed ones.—*To the Lamb*, at whose wrath the world trembles, ch. vi. 16. Why they call Christ the Lamb is evident from ver. 14. His holy atoning blood is the source of their salvation; see on ch. v. 6.

Ver. 11. *And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell down before the throne on their face, and worshipped God.* Ver. 12. *Saying, Amen, the blessing, and the glory, and the wisdom, and the thanksgiving, and the honour, and the power, and the strength, be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!*—The angels are our patterns in the adoration of God, whose glory is presented to our apprehension through their songs of praise, comp. Ps. xxix. 1, 2, lxxxix. 6, 7, ciii. 20. But the glory of God has most singularly manifested itself in the leading of his church through the wilderness of the world to the heavenly Canaan and Zion, so that the angels could not remain unconcerned in the matter. They would otherwise have been untrue to their high

calling and their delightful obligation. Their voice was heard at the birth of Christ, comp. Luke ii. 13, 14, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." So now they could not be silent, when the holy work, which had its unpromising commencement in the birth of Christ, has reached its close. There is joy before the angels of God over *one* sinner that repents (Luke xv. 10.) If they rejoice over the glory of God, which manifests itself in the conversion of a single sinner, how can they refrain from testifying their joy at the manifestation of God's glory in the final safety and well-being of his whole church? The worship is not addressed to God in contradistinction to Christ, but to God in Christ (the Lamb, according to ver. 17, is in the midst of the throne.) But that Christ is not expressly named, is to be explained on the ground, that essentially the same doxology had already been uttered in respect to him, in ch. v. 12. The connection between the two passages is marked by the two last words there being intentionally made the first here. Intentionally also are the same words repeated here, with a slight alteration (*thanksgiving* here instead of *riches* there), enough as a mark of independence.[1] The first *Amen* expressed an accord to the praise of the redeemed, and so marks the sphere in which the glory of the Lord has unfolded itself. The omission of the second *Amen* in several critical helps is to be explained from this signification of the first Amen not being understood. It is the less to be regarded, as in some copies even the first Amen has been omitted on the same account.—In the encomiums the seven are better divided into the three and four (as also in vi. 15, Isa. xi. 2), than into the four and three. For, by the first division, the *thanksgiving* appears at the head of the second group, and serves, like the *blessing* in the first, as an explanation of the following epithets—shows, that God must receive the honour, etc., in the commendation given of them. On the other hand, in ch. v. 12,

[1] Bengel remarks: "But why is it said here, that all the angels worshipped God, and not also the Lamb, since it is admitted elsewhere, that all the angels of God worship also the Son?. The answer is, that the angels are in an especial manner under God's oversight and dominion, as the faithful, in the New Testament, stand peculiarly under the Lamb." But this explanation of the fact is immediately dispersed by ch. v. 12.

the seven is divided by the four and the three : power and riches, wisdom and strength, honour and glory, blessing. The reverse order was naturally to have been expected, as the beginning here connects itself with the end there. Power and riches then stand together, as riches and strength in ch. vi. 15, wisdom and strength, as counsel and strength in Isa. xi. 2. The twin pair, honour and glory, remain together. Finally, in that case blessing stands alone, and the internal is also externally represented.

Ver. 13. *And one of the elders answered and said to me : Who are these clothed with white robes ? And whence came they ?* Expositors for the most part remark here superficially, that *answer* stands for, commenced to speak. Bengel, however, gave the correct view : " John had not indeed asked, but certainly desired to know, who the persons in white robes were. And this desire of his was met by the elder." A question can be asked otherwise than by a word. John's whole conduct betrayed that he burned with desire to get an exact account of the attractive appearance of the persons in white clothing. The answer to the silent question is thrown into the form of a verbal question, with the view simply of calling forth John's express request for information, and the confession of his own inability. Bengel : " It not only requires one who knows something to ask, but there must also be a fit opportunity for one who would communicate any thing to another, if he commences with a question, as was the case with our Lord in his wise procedure toward his disciples, the Samaritan woman, and others. In such a manner one can often get at the heart, and loose a man's tongue, who could not find his way to it before, so that he is glad at the circumstance." The *who* and *whence* art thou, was in ancient times the regular question to friends on their arrival.[1] The questions are afterwards answered in the reverse order, first the *whence*, then the *who*.

Ver. 14. *And I said to him : My Lord, thou knowest it. And he said to me : these are they, who come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made their robes bright in the blood of the Lamb.* In the speech of John there is a dis-

[1] See, for example, Homer, Od. V. 104 : Ξεῖνε τὸ μέν σε πρῶτον ἐγὼν εἰρήσομαι αὐτὴ τίς ; πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν ; πόθε τοι πόλις ἠδὲ τοκῆες. Other passages may be seen in Wolf's Curae.

creet request for information. Thou knowest it, says he; thou hast been longer here than I have been; I do not know. If thou wouldst tell me, I shall receive it with thankfulness.—John addresses the elder as his lord. Bengel: "Before an elder, the title of Lord was not so common as it is now; and that John should have said to the elder, Lord, nay, my Lord, has much significance in it. John saw great and glorious things, and the elders were there in the midst of them. He found himself in a state of holy wonder, and said to the elder, My Lord. Still greater things were disclosed to him there, and in his transport he forgot himself so far as to attempt even twice to worship the angel. To say, My Lord, as John did, and to worship, is not far different; nay, it is a step to the other." John said, My Lord, in the presence of the glory of the Lord, which shines upon the blessed, so that the expression of veneration at last returns to the Lord himself. So Lot in Gen. xix. 18 addressed the angels by the name Adonai, which properly belongs only to God; and in Isa. xlv. 14, the Gentiles who desire salvation fall down before the church of the Lord, and supplicate to her, because God is only in her, and there is no God besides. To take the "My Lord" in a feebler sense, is the less suitable, as we have here before us a vision, and the territory of appearance and mere courtesy is far away. Elsewhere also in the New Testament this address always occurs as an expression of veneration and dependence. The Greeks, in John xii. 21, address Philip thus, and certainly on no other account ("Lord, we would see Jesus"), because they transferred the glory of the master to the disciple. In John xx. 15, Mary takes Jesus for the gardener, but she doubtless would not have styled him Lord, if she had sought only common things of him, if she had not believed herself to be dependent on him in regard to her beloved. The address here, therefore, in unison with the following: Thou knowest it, points to the vast distance between what is here and what shall be hereafter; so that the most advanced, who still dwell here in flesh and faith, can only *look up* to the perfectly righteous. There is a very striking agreement between the "thou knowest it," and Peter's reply to our Lord in John xxi. 15, 16.—On the words, "These are they who come," Züllig remarks, "The present in the signification of the future renders it manifest that it is only a vision, when John

says he already saw them above, at the time he wrote; for they were certainly then still below on the earth, and could only be translated to heaven a considerable time afterwards, when they had borne their share in the tribulation spoken of."—It may be asked what we are to understand by "the great tribulation." According to Bengel, it must indicate generally the troubles of human life. "What else is this great tribulation than all men's pains and labour on the earth, which God has cursed, and the collected sorrows which have been brought on the human family by the fall of Adam? This is clear from the following contrast. The partakers of salvation shall hunger and thirst no more, be free henceforth from sweat and tears. The great tribulation, therefore, consists in hunger, thirst, heat, tears, &c. To this tribulation all men, not excepting the elect, have been subjected since the fall, in this vale of tears and sorrows. It is a plague, which one meets with every day; troubles may certainly be counted on. Respect is not had here to any particular tribulation, which some might have to suffer for the word of God; but it is this earthly sorrowful life itself, such as Adam doubtless experienced beyond any of his descendants. Before, he could walk up and down in Paradise, and eat of the fruit of its trees, one only excepted, without any toil on his part. But after the fall he had the burden of a laborious and troublesome cultivation laid on him. It was said, In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread; words that briefly express hunger, thirst, heat, and tears." But this exposition seeks in vain for support from ver. 16; the distresses mentioned there are not those generally of this life, but those of the wilderness. But what disproves it is, that by it the starting-point, the fainting of believers in prospect of the judgments which were going to be inflicted on the world, is overlooked, and so the connection is destroyed between ver. 9—17 and ver. 1—8. The same reason is also decisive against those who would understand by the great tribulation the persecution of Christians. The consolation for those Christians, who sighed under the persecutions of the world, has been given earlier, and finds its completion in ch. viii. 1. It lies in the contents of the seventh seal. The definite article alone, which implies the distress to be known from the preceding context, leads to the conclusion, that by the great tribulation the plagues of the world are to be understood, which

bring with them troubles also for the elect. To the same result we are also led by the original passage, Matt. xxiv. 21, "For there shall then be *great tribulation*, such as has not been from the beginning of the world till now, nor shall be." The subject of discourse there, too, is the judgments to be brought on the world, which necessarily involve the elect in sufferings along with others. Finally, this explanation is confirmed by comparing ch. iii. 10, where the hour of temptation is spoken of which shall come upon the whole world, to tempt those who dwell upon the earth. The subject of discourse there cannot be persecution, for the temptation appears as a future one, while the persecution raged at that very time. But here we can the less think of persecution, as there is not a syllable found in regard to what in that case would have been of such vast moment—fidelity and stedfastness. Only the general marks of believers are given. The *washing* and *making bright* are to be carefully distinguished. The washing denotes the obtaining of pardon of sin through the blood of Christ; the making bright sanctification which springs out of reconciliation. In the symbolical rites of the law, and in the explanation of it in Ezekiel, ch. xxxvi. 25, "and I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your impurities, and from all your filthiness will I purify you," the washing and sprinkling with water appears as an image of the forgiveness of sins (see Christol. there.) Filthy garments (the clothing being regarded as a symbol of the *state*[1]) were, in the Old Testament, borne by sinners, clean ones by the justified, Isa. lxiv. 5, Zech. ch. iii. 4, "and he answered and said to those who stood before him: Take away from him the filthy garments; and he said to Joshua, behold, I take away from thee thy sins, and they will clothe thee with festive garments." Here instead of the water the blood of Christ is put, to indicate that it is not simply forgiveness, but forgiveness as rooting itself in the atonement which is spoken of. We have a commentary in 1 John i. 7, "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin;" ver. 6, "This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water only (forgiveness without satisfaction), but by water and blood;" John xix. 34, "One of the soldiers pierced his side with

1 Vitringa: "The stola (robe) is a symbol of the condition or state in which any one is. Among the Orientals, as well as the Romans and other people of the west, the custom was such that from the robe, tunic, or gown, the state and dignity of any one could be easily perceived."

a spear, and immediately there came out water and blood." The great importance which is laid upon this in ver. 35, is to be explained from the apostle seeing a symbolical meaning in the procedure, from his perceiving in the water and the blood the forgiveness that has its root in the atonement of Christ. The point of connection here between the Revelation and the other writings of John is a very delicate and deep one.—To the making of the garments bright corresponds in the passage of Ezekiel referred to, ver. 26, the "giving of a new heart and a new spirit" (after the purging away of their sins); and in John, the "walking in the light," 1 John i. 7, "not sinning," ii. 1, iii. 6, 9, "keeping one's self," v. 18, "doing the will of God," ii. 17, "doing what is well-pleasing before him," iii. 22, "keeping his commandments," v. 3. The courageous witness-bearing, which, according to ch. xii. 11, springs from the sense of forgiveness as obtained through the blood of the Lamb, is only a particular manifestation of the sanctified life which is denoted by the bright garments. On the *white* or *bright* as the colour of clear splendour, the symbolical image of glory, comp. on ch. iii. 4. Here the white is the colour of the righteous, which streams forth in the splendour of their virtues—comp. iii. 18, 19, xix. 8. For, that the *doing*, and not the *reward* of holiness, is what is here spoken of (whence the white garment differs here from that in v. 9 and vi. 11), appears first from the active, "they have made them white;" then, and more especially, from a reward on this account being announced in v. 15; and still farther from the white clothing which is said to have been *given* to believers (vi. 11), never having like this been unclean. That there is an internal connection between white clothing in the one sense and in the other, or between sanctification and glory, it is scarcely necessary to remark.

Ver. 15. *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he who sits upon the throne shall tabernacle before them. Therefore*, because, as Bengel says, "they have been fitly prepared for it by the blood of the Lamb."—The delineation of the blessedness is completed in a threefold three: they are before the throne, they serve, they are tented;—they hunger not, they thirst not, they suffer no heat;—the Lamb feeds them, leads them, wipes them. The foundation for this lies in the three number of the Mosaic blessing on the

chosen people, which, with those here, has reached its complete fulfilment.—Vitringa thinks that here the happy condition of the perfectly righteous *on this earth* is represented. But the whole position of our section is against this, which can unfold nothing that lies absolutely beyond the seventh seal; and so also is ch. vi. 11, where the white garments are mentioned in regard to the intermediate state before the completion of God's kingdom—the standing before the throne of God, which belongs, according to ch. iv. 2, to heaven—the serving him in his temple, which is also heavenly, ch. xi. 19, xiv. 15, 17, xv. 5, 8, xvi. 1, 17; and a comparison of the parallel passages, ch. xiv. 1—5, xv. 2—4, xx. 4—6. The affinity of our passage to those which relate to the "regeneration," Matth. xix. 28, the state of blessedness to be enjoyed by the church on the renovated earth, can prove nothing, inasmuch as there exists an internal connection between the state of the perfectly righteous *before*, and that *after* the resurrection.—To remark, "that here we have a representation, 1, as to how the righteous serve God, and, 2, what God gives to them," is fitted to mislead; for even the being before the throne of God, and serving him in his temple, free from the sorrow and vexation which in many ways were experienced from the vanities of time, appears here as wonderful grace and recompense (hence the *therefore*), according to the hymn "Den wahren Gott zu schauen," &c. ("To behold the true God and the beautiful garniture of the heavenly world, this is real blessedness,") and 1 Cor. xiv. 12. Even in this life it is not only a sacred duty, but also a precious privilege of believers to endeavour to copy after the example of Anna, who "departed not from the temple, and served God with fastings and prayers day and night." Bengel: "In the world it is held to be a great honour when a lord of the chamber, a high servant may always be about the sovereign, and can get the nearest access to him at all times; but what is this compared with the privilege of those who are before the throne of God, and wait upon him day and night in his temple?"—*He will tabernacle upon them* is as much as: he will perform to them the part of a tent. The tent, therefore, is the Lord himself, and Ps. xxxi. 20 corresponds, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the confederacy of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a tabernacle from the strife of tongues." The correspondence here is

closer than in Ps. xxviii. 5, where the godly are represented as hidden with the Lord in his tent. But in the other passage the Lord himself, as in the words before us, his gracious countenance directed upon the godly, is their hiding-place and tabernacle. Isa. iv. 6 is also to be compared, where it is said respecting the time of salvation, and the completion of the kingdom of God, "And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and rain." The tabernacle consists, according to our verse, in the grace of the Lord abiding with his people and protecting them—in the Shekinah. In Deut. xxxiii. 27, and Ps. xc. 1, God was called by Moses the dwelling-place of his people amid the troubles of life. Here also, as it appears, there is an allusion to the feast of tabernacles: in that blessed time there shall be an infinitely glorious tabernacle.

Ver. 16. *They shall not hunger any more nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.* Ver. 17. *For the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them into life-fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* The fundamental passage for ver. 16, and the two first members of ver. 17, is Isa. xlix. 10, "They shall neither hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them." Compare the similar passage, ch. xlviii. 21, "And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts; he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them; he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out." What, then, in allusion to the earlier proof of the Lord's shepherd-faithfulness, as manifested in the guiding of his people through the literal wilderness, is said respecting the Lord's watchful care and goodness toward his people during their journey through the wilderness of the world, is here transferred to the condition of those who have completed this journey; with them the word first becomes perfectly true, the promised good is actually reached. There are only two important deviations from the original passages. 1. Instead of "He that has mercy on them," we have here, "The Lamb in the midst of the throne." Thus what is said of Jehovah in the prophet is appropriated to Christ. The relation of Christ to the supreme God, is here

marked as a more internal one than in ch. v. 6, where the Lamb stands between the throne with the four beasts, and the elders, as the exalted mediator between God and his people. The expression, "In the midst of the throne," has respect also to Christ as sitting on the right hand of God. It declares him to be equal in might and glory with the Father; and in the Revelation stands in unison with such things, as his having the seven Spirits of God, receiving divine worship, having applied to him directly what in the Old Testament is written of God. It accords also with what in the Gospel of John is written of the Word of God (comp. here xix. 13), who in the beginning was with God and was God, of the oneness of Christ with the Father, of his being in the Father, and of the Father being in him, in ch. xiv. 10, 11. The bringing out of the full Godhead of Christ is suitable here, because only from this point of view could Christ have been substituted for God in the original passages, and because Christ could no otherwise bestow the highest good on his people than as the possessor of essential Godhead. 2. Instead of simple "water-springs," in the original passages, we have here "*life*-fountains of water." This addition indicates, that spiritual fountains of water are meant. The well-springs of life here correspond to the wells of salvation in Isa. xii. 3, "And ye draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation." Comp. Ps. lxxxvii. 7, where also the springs are the springs of salvation, which refresh the thirsty soul and the parched land, Ps. lxxxiv. 6. Life with John is "that life, which really is such, the direct antithesis of death; as the Logos is called the life—that is, life in full vigour disturbed in its flow by no check, nothing painful or unpleasant, but blessed life, as God the primeval source of life gives it, a life that is raised above all creaturely evanescence and weakness" (Köstlin, Lehrbegr. des Johannes, p. 235.) Life is consequently another term for salvation, which is also indicated by Ezekiel in ch. xlvii. by the fountain, which issues from the sanctuary in Zion, and flows into the Dead Sea, refreshing and fructifying the wilderness on its way. Also in Rev. xxi. 6, xxii. 1—17 the water of life is descriptive of salvation. That by the introduction of this single word, Isa. xii. 3 is combined with the original passage into one whole, appears the more suitable, as the figure of that passage was at the feast of tabernacles embodied in the symbolical action of pouring out

water. That an allusion to this should have been made here was the more natural, as the palms and the tabernacles had already preceded (ver. 15.) The salvation or life, which through that rite is designated as the privilege and the hope of the people of God, is in the fullest measure secured to them here by him, who as the Lamb is at the same time the true shepherd. They now receive in truth what was only imaged by the literal waters of the wilderness. For, these were a type of the well-springs of salvation, which the Lord opens in all ages for his people in the wilderness of trouble, and most gloriously when the period of their pilgrimage is over—see my Comm. on Ps. cvii. 35.[1] It is to be carefully noted that it is precisely in the gospel of John that the passages occur, in which the blessings of salvation, which the Lord gives even in this life to his people, are denoted by not hungering, not thirsting, the true bread and the living water—comp. ch. iv. 14, 15, vi. 35, vii. 38. These passages are the more analogous to the one before us, as in them also respect is had to what the Lord formerly did for his people in the wilderness. This starting-point is distinctly marked in ch. vi. 30, 31, "Then said they to him, what sign showest thou then, that we may see and believe on thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat." From what has been remarked we see that hunger, thirst, the heat of the sun, are mentioned as the leading and more manifest forms of the annoyances that were experienced in the march through the wilderness. Viewed in regard to the substance, hunger and thirst indicate the unsatisfied need for salvation, the sun the glow of tribulations—comp. ch. xvi. 8, 9. The conclusion of ver. 17: and God shall wipe away, etc., is taken from Isa. xxv. 8. These words return again, not without reason, in ch. xxi. 4, with a slight, and

[1] The reading ζώσας for ζωῆς is by much the worst supported of the two. It has only arisen from the copyists stumbling at the double genitive. All the parallel passages in the Apocalypse speak for ζωῆς, ch. xxi. 6, xxii. 1, 17. Of living *fountains* we nowhere else read, but always of living *waters*, and this has a solid ground in the circumstance that fountains are always living. For the addition to the original passages there must have been a definite reason, as in the substitution of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, for, him that has mercy. The ζώσας does not contain such an one, for it does not arise from the image. In the ζωῆς also alone do we perceive a reason for the word, that has been introduced, being placed first. It lies in the reference to Isa. xii. 3, where also it is the springs (not the waters) of salvation that are discoursed of.

as to the meaning unimportant, yet still intentional variation. For instead of, "*out of* the eyes," it is there "*from* the eyes." (Such small differences almost constantly occur in the borrowings and repetitions of Scripture. They serve to prevent the appearance of a lifeless adoption.) In ch. xxi. 4 the subject of discourse is the "regeneration," the kingdom of glory upon earth, to which the words in the original passages refer, and in which they are to find their only complete and ultimate fulfilment.

Ch. viii. 1. *And when he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for an half hour.* That these words are to be connected with the close of ch. vi. is clear from what was formerly remarked. The more customary it has been for expositors here to surrender themselves to mere conjecture, it is the more necessary to lay a sure foundation for our exposition. And first, as certainly as all the seals contain scenes of judgment, so certainly must the silence here denote the dumb astonishment of the raging enemies of Christ and his church. It is this that the connection establishes. Another means, by which we shall get above the uncertainty of conjecture, is furnished by the fundamental passages in the Old Testament. That there must be some of this description, may be regarded at the outset as matter of undoubted certainty. For, otherwise the Seer would have spoken out more plainly. The *silence* must somehow have been definitely fixed as to its meaning, and for this, besides the connection, we are thrown upon the writings of the Old Testament. Now, we have actually three prophetic passages, in which silence is found in a similar connection as here. First, the proper fundamental passage, on which the two others are dependent, Hab. ii. 20, "And the Lord is in his holy temple, be silent before him all the earth." These words form there the emphatic close of the threatened judgment on Babylon, the representative of the ungodly world. The Lord will appear from the dwelling-place of the Almighty in resistless power to exercise judgment on the impotent; deep silence reigns on earth, recently so uproarious; wickedness shuts its mouth; the raging of the people, the blasphemy of the heathen ceases at once on the day when the Lord alone is exalted. Then Zeph. i. 7, after the representation of a frightful judgment of the Lord upon the earth: "Be silent before the Lord, for near is the day

of the Lord." Finally, Zech. ii. 13, "Be silent, O all flesh before the Lord, for he is raised up out of his holy habitation." The announcement of a glorious manifestation of God precedes, by which he was to humble the heathen world, and especially proud Babylon, vers. 12, 13, and raise his people out of the dust of abasement. So that the meaning is, then indeed shall all flesh, in itself helpless and confounded, which hitherto has raged so loud against the Lord and his church, be brought to silence.[1] From these fundamental passages we can have no doubt as to the import of the silence here. It is a silence like that of Pharaoh when he sank with his host into the Red Sea. It forms the contrast to what we read in ch. xiii. 5, 6, "And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." *Once so loud and now so silent!* The word: And there was a silence, is unspeakably comforting amid the tumults of the world. The jubilee of the truth runs parallel with the silence of revolt.—In the earlier "Revelation of Jesus Christ," in regard to his coming for judgment, there is a corresponding declaration in Matt. xxiv. 30, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. And then shall the tribes of the earth howl, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory." The *howling* of the ungodly world there corresponds to the silence here. Both imply absolute annihilation; and both the silence and the howling alike come into play at intervals through the whole of history, but at the end alone reach their perfection. As often as a power manifests itself in opposition to God and Christ and the church, a whole series of preparatory divine judgments begins to be developed (the six first seals), and then at last descends the fatal blow. The whole process terminates in the dead silence and dreadful howling of the creature that had presumed to revolt against its Creator and Redeemer.—The *heaven* here comes into notice only as the visible theatre—comp. ch. iv. 1, xii. 1. In reality the silence belongs to the earth.—The *half hour* likewise is not the time of the actual accomplishment, but

1 Michaelis: Est imperativus majestaticus idemque propheticus, ut Hab. ii. 20, Zeph. i. 7. Silentium efficaciter imperat, et eo ipso dum imperat futurum praedicit. Ion: Disperent omnes impii.

the time of the symbolical representation. If this is considered, it will be seen that the half hour, in harmony with the high import of this seal, as the one that brings the final decision, is a long time. The first seals followed quickly on one another, and had probably each occupied but a single moment. The period occupied in receiving the whole Revelation was probably limited to the space of a day (comp. on ch. i. 10), as also the prophet Zechariah had imparted to him in one night the whole series of visions, which together present a complete image of the future fate of the people of God, ch i. 7—vi 15. The entire cycle, too, of the prophecies in Ezekiel contained in ch. xxxiii.—xxxix. belong to a single day, which is more exactly described in ch. xxxiii. 21, 22.—If we have correctly made out the meaning of this verse, it follows that here there can follow no continuation, but only a new beginning. The oppression of the church by the world-power is the starting-point and the pole of the whole Revelation. But that power we see here lying shattered and broken on the ground. New scenes may possibly be disclosed, in which other aspects of the great conflict between God and the world shall be made known. Such indeed *must* be expected; for here everything still wears very much of a general character, and we should lay down the book with an unsatisfactory feeling, if we found ourselves here at the close. In particular, the final catastrophe is but very imperfectly described by the thought, which is here rendered prominent—the profound silence of the lately so noisy world. All bears the impress of a prelude of a general plan, which is afterwards to be followed up by the further development—one that shall go more thoroughly into the history of that world-power, whose persecutions formed the immediate occasion of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. But the action cannot possibly be continued farther on the same scene.

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS.

Ch. viii. 2—xi. 19.

Introductory Remarks.

The distribution of this group is as follows. Ver. 2. "And I saw the seven angels, who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets," supplies, as it were, the place of a superscription. It presents immediately before our eyes, those from whom all action proceeds in the great drama that follows. Next comes in the vision of the incense-offering angel, a kind of prelude, ver. 3—5. Then begins the work of the seven angels. The plagues of the four first, vers. 6—12, alight upon the *earth*, the *sea*, the *rivers*, the *heavens*, and thus compose together one whole, inasmuch as they embrace the entire territory of creation. The three last trumpets are likewise bound up together. After the four first have been brought to a close, they are announced in ch. viii. 13 by an eagle, which proclaims a threefold woe on the inhabitants of the earth. The fifth trumpet and the first woe is contained in ch. ix. 1—12; the sixth trumpet and the second woe in vers. 13—21, on which follows an episode in ch. x. 1—xi. 13, so that the concluding formula is only given in ch. xi. 14. Then comes at the close of the whole the seventh trumpet and the third woe, in ch. xi. 15—19.

The three last trumpets, by being designated as the three last woes, are represented relatively to the four first, as greatly the more important and frightful; and in accordance with this is the much more lengthened description that is given of them. The fifth trumpet, or the first woe, takes up almost twice as much space as is devoted to the whole of the first four together. Only in the third woe, the seventh trumpet, do we find a less extended description than might have been expected; the reason of which shall afterwards be considered.

Again, on the first six trumpets in relation to the seventh—leaving out of view the point of some of them belonging to the woes—there is impressed the character of the half and incomplete. In the first four trumpets the *third part* of the sphere on

which the injury alight is uniformly mentioned. The locusts under the *fifth* trumpet-torment, according to ch. ix. 5, 10, *five* months, the five being the signature of the half and incomplete, in contrast to the last trumpet and the last woe, when the mystery of God is finished, which he has revealed to his servants, the prophets, ch. x, 7. In the sixth trumpet the third part of men is again killed.

The following remarks may serve for defining the circle within which the seven trumpets move. The historical starting-point of the whole book comes first into consideration. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which John imparts, was occasioned by a severe oppression of the Christian church through the heathen world-power. Accordingly, we expect such a revelation as will bring destruction to this hostile power, but salvation to the church. Then, the introductory vision of the angel with frankincense, in ch. viii. 3—5, is to be taken into account. The fundamental thought here is, that God will hear the fervent prayers of his struggling and afflicted church, and cause his judgments to go forth against the world. Hence, only such things can be suitable here as are salutary to the church, destructive to the world; and the expositions, which discover in the group persecutions of Christians, heresies (that of Arius, for example, whom many understand most strangely under the falling star in ch. viii. 10), mendicant friars, etc., are at the outset excluded. Finally, the whole in the seven trumpets runs out into the fact, that the kingdom of the world has become the Lord's and his anointed, ch. xi. 15. But the six first trumpets are already even outwardly marked as preparatory to the seventh. They could, therefore, only indicate approaches of the dominion of the Lord and his anointed, precursory manifestations of power on their part in respect to it—as Bengel justly remarks, though unfortunately without afterwards abiding by the right view: "Beforehand, however, there falls on the kingdom of the world one stroke and calamity after another." Vitringa, also, had a correct apprehension of the general import, and only departed from this in his interpretation of the particular parts; for he says, "The plagues were designed to punish and extirpate the enemies of God's people, so that that large and glorious kingdom might be prepared for Christ and his saints."

There can be no doubt that this group bears an independent character, that it stands by itself separate and complete. This is manifest especially from a comparison of ch. viii. 5 with ch. xi. 19. In the former passage we have the prophecy, in the latter the complete fulfilment. Further, at the *close* of the vision we stand at the *last end* (see Introd. to ch. xii.), so that the scene cannot be prolonged farther in this line. At the *beginning*, again, of the vision, we stand at the first commencement, and it cannot possibly be imagined that we have here a description of the things that were to follow immediately on what is announced in ch. viii. 1. (See, in regard to the notion of every thing to the end of ch. xi. still belonging to the territory of the seven seals, the Introd. to ch. xii.) In ch. viii. 1, at the opening of the seventh seal, we see the world-power lying shattered and prostrate on the ground. Here, on the other hand, we have another series of catastrophes, which bear the signature of the *half* and *incomplete*, and only when we reach the seventh trumpet do we find ourselves again at the same point at which we were when the seventh seal was disclosed. In the sixth seal even, where every thing appeared already in dreadful convulsion and immediately approaching its end, it was impossible that such catastrophes should follow, as are indicated here in the first four trumpets. The result is, that the world-catastrophes represented here could only run *parallel* to those described in the earlier group. But the independence maintained by us is that only of but one *group*, not that of a *separate writing*, which has been only accidentally and externally united into one whole with another. There exists, first, a near connection between this group and the preceding one. If we had here an independent writing before us, the beginning: And I saw the seven angels, would be unsuitable. The introductory vision of the angel with incense would then also have formally stood at the head, without being connected by any sort of bridge with what goes before. But now, since the seven angels with the trumpets are formally linked together with the seven angels, they must also be materially associated with them. In an independent writing also the theatre would have required to be more particularly described. Here, it is presupposed as a thing known from the preceding context (ch. iv. 1): John still finds himself in heaven. But this group likewise points forward

to what is to follow; as appears in a double respect. First, the final catastrophe, to which all the others are preparatory, the object of all the fervent longings of the people of God, is delineated here with greater brevity than the other preliminary ones. The description of it is properly confined to ch. xi. 19. This can only be explained on the ground, that the more extended representation of the final catastrophe was reserved for a later opportunity. The supposition is the more probable, as the brevity is an enigmatical one, pointing to a commentary afterwards to be given. Further, the Revelation was seen in the midst of the Roman persecution. According to the analogy of the earlier prophets, that, for example, of Isaiah's prophecy in ch. xiii., we expect on the general ground of the representation of judgments to be inflicted on the world, a special disclosure of the fate of this ungodly world-power in particular. But this is as little found here as in the group of the seven seals. All the judgments befal the inhabitants of the earth, under whom the Romans are certainly comprehended, but never solely intended. Vitringa, who remarks, "The seven trumpet-blasts indicate the evils which are decreed against the Roman kingdom on account of its hostility to the church of Christ, and which shall end with the entire subjection of this kingdom," resorts to an arbitrary limitation of the sphere of the divine judgments. But this group, like the preceding one, for the most part retains a kind of general character, which was admirably in place in the introduction to the closing prophetical book of Scripture, though it could not possibly continue to stand at that. We should have laid down the book with an unsatisfactory feeling, if it had merely been distinguished by the vividness with which it represented the avenging righteousness and redeeming love of God, and had not presented the leading features of the later development of things in the history of the church and the world, more especially in that direction, which accords with the historical starting-point of the Revelation. We could not otherwise have been able to get rid of the thought, that the introduction in ch. i. 1—3 makes too high pretensions. None of the great prophets of the Old Testament, though they still had the mission first of all of instilling general truths into the minds of the people, while John found this already done to his hand, remained thus at mere general

enunciations, such as, that sin is the destruction of a people, that God punishes all the enemies of his church, etc. With all of them, indeed, the special rests on the general as its foundation ; only it does not stand there. There is, besides, in Revelation a two-fold special reference to the contents of the later groups. The voices of the seven thunders in ch. x. 4, which John (in the meantime) was not to write, but to seal up, point to a later group, in which it is going to be reported concerning the time of the mystery of God, as he has announced it to his servants the prophets. And the beast which ascends from the abyss, which suddenly meets us in ch. xi. 7, is a riddle that finds no solution within this group, though it is impossible but that a solution should be given. These indications pointing forwards to the following groups correspond to the not less intended allusion to the group of the seven seals in ch. ix. 4.

We may endeavour to determine more exactly the relation of this group to the preceding one. The commonest and most frightful scourge through which the vengeance of heaven discharges itself on the apostate earth is war. The other plagues, such as hunger and pestilence, commonly appear only in its train. In the preceding group also war has broken out. But it appears there only as on a like footing with the other plagues. This second introductory group, however, is entirely devoted to it. To the last trumpet, that of the final victory, all here is only an expansion of the words of our Lord, "Nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," Matt. xxiv. 7.

We have now only further to endeavour to explain the symbol of the trumpets. In Scripture trumpets are always employed on account of their piercing, loud sound. What may be more exactly meant, must in each case be determined by the connection. The sound of the trumpet has no intrinsic worth in itself.

That the loud stirring noise of the trumpet is the essential characteristic is evident from the circumstance that the sound of the trumpet is itself described as a cry, תרועה, for example in Lev. xxv. 9, and that the loud cry goes along with it as a fitting accompaniment; comp. Josh. vi. 5, where the people were to raise a great shout at the blowing of the trumpets, Zeph. i. 16. Then it appears from such passages as Isa. lviii. 1, "Raise thy voice like a trumpet," Hos. viii. 1, "Put the trumpet to thy mouth and

say, He comes upon the house of the Lord like an eagle," where the *loud* tone is plainly indicated by that of the trumpet. Finally, it appears from the use of trumpets in the sacred music. In my Commentary on the Psalms, it was remarked in reference to this: "Other instruments (besides harps and psalteries) are mentioned only in festival and national songs of praise; as trumpets at the thanksgiving for Jehoshaphat's victory, Ps. xlvii. 5, at the paschal feast in Ps. lxxxi. 3, at the consecration of the walls of the city in Nehemiah's time, in Ps. cl. In the historical books trumpets are mentioned at the bringing in of the ark of the covenant, 1 Chron. xv. 24, "And the priests trumpeted with trumpets before the ark of the Lord" (comp. 2 Sam. vi. 15, "And David and all Israel brought up the ark with a shout and the sound of trumpets")—at the consecration of the temple, 2 Chron. v. 12, 13—at the solemn restoration of the worship under Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxix. 26, 27; finally, in Ezra iii. 10, Neh. xii. 35. They are always mentioned in connection with other very noisy instruments. In 2 Chron. xxx. 21 it is said of the passover under Hezekiah, that "they praised the Lord with instruments of strength, which were to Jehovah," Michaelis: musical instruments being employed of such a kind as gave forth a strong sound; Jarchi: with trumpets, having respect to xxix. 26, 27. (Psalms, vol. III. p. xvi., Eng. Trans.) Accordingly, the loud stirring noice was the characteristic. This use of the trumpets in sacred music entirely accords with Numb. x. 10, "And on your feast-days, and on your high festivals, and on your new moons, ye shall blow with trumpets." Hence, festivals and trumpets were inseparably connected together. As the festival-day was related to other days, so the sound of the trumpet to other sounds.

Bähr in his Symbolik (Th. II., p. 594), has laboured in vain to give to the sound of the trumpet a definite meaning, especially to bring it into connection with the Sabbath-idea. But it is against this, that in the Sabbatical year there was no sounding of trumpets, nor at the Sabbath of weeks. Then, it must be altogether denied that on the first day of the seventh month pre-eminently the trumpets were blown, so as that it should be known by this, and in this alone should be found the peculiarity of the festival. The day is called in Lev. xxiii. 24, Numb. xxix. 1, not *the* day, but *a* day of

blowing of trumpets, not less than the great festivals, at which this was to be understood, as a matter of course, to be done. The sound of the trumpet was not more peculiar to it than the cessation from work, the calling of a sacred convocation, the presentation of sacrifices. Still less indeed, for it was common to this feast not merely with the great feasts, but even with all the new moons, according to Numb. x. 10. We must not separate the blowing of the trumpets on the first day of the seventh month, as to its meaning, from that on the other new moons, and generally on the public festivals. As the sacrifices on this day possessed no partial character, but represented all spheres of the religious life, so we must not give to the sound of the trumpets a partial meaning. It points to the more excited character of the religious feeling, which is peculiar to festive occasions generally, of the "Lord, have mercy on us," not less than of the "Lord, we give thee thanks," and in particular to those feasts which marked the commencement of a new period of time. Besides, the sound of the trumpet being put for the mark or signal in Lev. xxiii. 24, shows that the blowing of the trumpets on that day had only a subjective character, that it merely served to bring the Lord to the remembrance of the congregation, comp. Numb. x. 9, "And ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets, and it shall be remembered to you before the Lord your God, ver. 10, and it shall serve to you for a remembrance before your God." Bähr's supposition, of its being indicated by the sound of the trumpet, that Israel was brought into remembrance before Jehovah, is against this passage. According to it the blowing with trumpets is a *call of the congregation*, and not an announcement on the part of God. Else, the blowing with trumpets must have been committed to the priests, and not to the people. Nor in Numb. xxix. 1, could it have appeared among the obligations of the church at large, along with the calling of sacred convocations, and the cessation from all work. Finally, the hypothesis of Bähr finds no support in the circumstance, that by the prescription of the law the trumpets must be sounded throughout the land in the year of jubilee on the day of atonement. By this it was merely intimated, through the strong, far-resounding sound of the trumpet, that an important time for the land had come in. The 50th year was thereby consecrated, Lev. xxv. 10, set apart

from the number of the rest. The more definite purpose is intimated in the proclamation of liberty throughout the whole land for all its inhabitants, mentioned in that passage. Only in this connection did the loud sound become at the same time a joyful one.

We must distinguish, whether the trumpets must denote what God has to say to the church or the world, or what the church has to say to God. This distinction was already made in the Mosaic law. Of the use of the trumpets for what the Lord has to say to the church, it is treated in the classic passage on the trumpets, Numb. x. 2—8; where, however, only two occasions are mentioned, the assembling of the congregation and decamping. And of their use in what the church had to say to God, in times of distress or on festival days, it is treated in ver. 9, 10.

In the former case, the sound of the trumpet might with perfect indifference be employed to announce a joyful subject, a great salvation; as, for example, the falling of the walls of Jericho; or to give notice of great tribulation, as in Joel ii. 1, where the day of judgment is announced by trumpets, "Blow with trumpets on Zion, and sound upon my holy mount, let all inhabitants of the earth tremble, for the day of the Lord comes, and is near." But it can only be in respect to important transactions, such as were of general significance, of deep pervasive power, that they are used; either great catastrophes are announced by trumpets, or important tidings, which the Lord has to communicate to his people. As the Lord will never summon his people for trifling matters to his throne, the sound of the trumpet might certainly be taken for the common note of a summoning before the Lord.

In the latter case the blowing of the trumpets might serve equally well to denote an animated "Lord, in distress to thee we call," and an animated and solemn, Te Deum laudamus. The characteristic is merely the rising of the state of feeling above the common measure.

The question: Why should the blowing of trumpets have been a matter properly belonging to the priests by the law of Moses? is simply to be answered thus: because the trumpets "had of all instruments the loudest, strongest, most powerful tone," and on this account were used, where the Lord had to say something of

importance to his church, or where the church came before him in a particularly lively and excited state of feeling. The trumpets stand related to the other instruments, as the Lord's servants to the ordinary members of the church, as the feast-day to the other days.

Let us turn now more especially to the section before us. The more immediate import of the trumpet-sound is determined by the starting-point of the book. The occasion of this was the oppression of the church by the heathen world-power. Accordingly by the trumpets only great catastrophes can be denoted, through which destruction should be brought to the world, and salvation be first prepared for the church, and then actually brought in. The trumpets here are *exciting* for all—*joyfully* exciting for the church, *frightfully* exciting for the world.

Such generally is the signification of the trumpets here. With a certain degree of truth, however, three special references may still be supposed.

By combining the seven number with the trumpets we are not unnaturally reminded of the conquest of Jericho. For seven days must Israel, according to Jos. vi., march round the city at the Lord's command in solemn procession, with the ark of the covenant and seven priests blowing with trumpets—each day once—but on the seventh day, seven times. And at the last round the walls fell down. In the book of Joshua Jericho has a kind of symbolical meaning. What was done at the fortress, which guarded the entrance into the territory of the Canaanites, presented an image of what should be done in general respecting the Canaanitish power. Faith saw in the last trumpet-blast at the walls of Jericho, along with these, the whole state of the Canaanites, apparently so strong and invincible, falling to the ground. If Jericho, then, in the book of Joshua forms an image of the Canaanitish power, it is admirably fitted to stand as a type of the world-power generally, the overthrow of which ensues on the blowing of the seventh trumpet, in which all the preceding ones culminate.

The Old Testament presents a second case of the combination of trumpets with the seven, and one that stands in an easy and natural connection with the subject before us. After seven times

seven years it was ordained in the Mosaic law, that the year of jubilee should be proclaimed by trumpets—the year, when the Lord announced himself as proprietor—the year, when every one returned to his possession (Lev. xxv. 13)—the year of freedom and of restoration for all the distressed, who looked for it with anxious longing. This year appears even in the Old Testament, in Isa. lxi. 1, 2, as a type of the redemption from the slavery of the world, the year of the Lord's grace and the day of the vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn. Such consolation breaks in here at the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

Finally, the trumpet stands in a close relation to the excited character of war, and is peculiarly the warlike instrument—comp. Zeph. i. 16; Jer. iv. 19, xlii. 14; Ezek. vii. 14. Hence also, among the catastrophes to be inflicted by the Lord, which were denoted in general by the blowing of the trumpets, it was especially suited for announcing the tribulations of war that were impending from the Lord. Bengel: "In the prophecy is described God's war against the enemies of his kingdom, on account of which the trumpets are here peculiarly appropriate."

Ch. viii. 2. *And I saw the seven angels, who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.* Luther translates improperly: And I saw seven angels (leaving out the article), who entered before God. The expression: who stand before God, appears here as the characteristic mark of the seven angels; *q. d.* those seven angels, who stand before God. To go at seasonable times before God, to execute his commands, is peculiar to all angels—comp. Job i. 6.[1] But here it is a constant standing before God that is spoken of, which belongs only to the elect angels—those among them, who have a similar position to the seven princes among the servants of the kings of Persia, "who saw the king's face, and sat the first in the kingdom," Esther i. 14; comp. Ezra vii. 14. To stand before God is of like import with "beholding the face of the Father in heaven" (Matth. xviii. 10), and the entering in before the glory of the Holy One, which, in Tob. xii. 15, is affirmed of the seven most distin-

1 Vitringa: "It is the part of all, who are employed in the temple before God, to *stand* before him; that is, to denote and yield their services to him with the greatest promptitude of mind. In the temple of the Lord of Hosts it is the part of no one to *sit*, excepting Jehovah himself."

guished angels.[1] The important office was committed to the most eminent of God's servants. How glorious the dignity of the church, since the most exalted of the angels are employed in her service!—The distinction of angelic orders is involved in the very being of angels. For God's creations are no democratic chaos. They everywhere form organisms, in which a gradual rise takes place from the lower to the higher. What the apostle says in 1 Cor. xv. 41 respecting the material department of the heavenly bodies, "there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another in glory," must prevail also in the spiritual. The position, too, which Satan took up is incomprehensible on any other supposition than that he was furnished before his fall with powers or prerogatives that ennobled him above the other angels, and invested him with an exalted dignity. In the Old Testament the seraphim in Isa. vi. point to a distinction of rank among the angels, appearing as they do to stand immediately before the throne of God, and whose name, the nobles, the principes, alone indicates their elevated place; so also do the angel-princes in Dan. x. 13.[2] A distinction in rank is recognised by our Lord himself in the New Testament, when in Matth. xviii. 10, out of the circle of angels he makes mention of those, who always behold the face of his father in heaven. In Luke i 19 Gabriel describes himself as one who stands before God, as one of the most distinguished angels. In the enumeration of "thrones, dominions, principalities, powers," in the epistles of Paul, Col. i. 16, ii. 10, comp. Rom. viii. 38, Eph. i. 20, ss., iii. 10, vi. 11, ss., we cannot but perceive a recognition of different ranks in the angelic world, while it is true that St Paul maintains a reserve as to any more specific distinctions, and opposes the prying curiosity that would seek for such. In 1 Pet. iii. 22 also, beside the general name of angels, principalities and powers are mentioned; and in Jude ver. 8 (comp. 2 Pet. ii. 10) dominions and majesties are spoken of among the angels. The only thing peculiar to the passage before us is the seven number of angels in

1 That passage in which Raphael is represented as calling himself one of the seven angels, who present the prayers of the saints and go in before God's glory, serves to confirm what we have said on the article in the passage before us. In both alike *the* seven angels are spoken of who have such access to God.

2 See in regard to the distinction of higher and lower angels in the Old Testament my Beitr. I. p. 163.

the first rank. No other passage of Scripture teaches this. Even in the Apocrypha it occurs only in a poetical way, in the book Tobias.[1] But the variance is only an apparent one; for the limits between the different angelic orders will always be more or less of a fluctuating sort, and that precisely seven should here be mentioned arises from the seven trumpets which were required for the scenic representation. It is manifestly the seven number of the trumpets which determined the seven number of the angels, and not the reverse. Had ten trumpets been needed, there would also, beyond doubt, have been ten angels spoken of as standing before God.

Ver. 3. *And another angel came and stood beside the altar, and had a golden censer; and much incense was given him, that he might give it to the prayers of all saints on the golden altar before the throne.* In the times of the first persecutions, as Bengel remarks, the Christians prayed with great earnestness and stedfast perseverance. But under the form of the fact there is here, at the same time, couched an admonition: if ye would gain the victory over the world, and see its completion, continue instant in prayer; for, "the prayer of the righteous availeth much when it is earnest. Elias was a man like as we are, and prayed a prayer that it should not rain, and it rained not upon the earth for three years and six months," Jas. v. 16, 17. Many of the older expositors would understand Christ by the other angel. But this view is inadmissible, not for the reasons assigned by Bengel, that Christ is never represented as an angel in the New Testament, and that *another* angel could only mean one who had likewise been created. In opposition to this see ch. vii. 2, x. 1, xviii. 1, where by the other angel is undoubtedly meant Christ. The reason why he cannot be understood here is, that there is no distinguishing predicate, nor is there anything in what the angel accomplishes, which raises him above the rank of ordinary angels. It is not his coming forth that renders the prayers of the saints acceptable; but he has simply the position of a messenger and a bearer—a heavenly representative. Only by misapprehending the position here occupied by the angel, by supposing that it was

1 Nitzsch., System, § 90: "On the foundation now laid of doctrinal truth, there may again often be produced a free poetical application and use of what is recorded."

through his mediation the prayers of the saints were first rendered truly acceptable, have men come, on the ground of no properly mediatorial agency being ascribed to angels in Scripture, to adopt the conclusion that the angel here can be no other than Christ.[1] The angel in this case is only a symbolical figure ; his agency belongs merely to the character of the vision, which must give to all a visible shape, not to the substance itself—although in this respect the internal harmony between the heavenly hosts and the church on earth certainly lies at the foundation. The angel could not otherwise have had even this place in the vision assigned to him. If prayer embodied itself in frankincense, there must be a heavenly representative of believers above who should present the frankincense. If the veil of the frankincense is a thin and transparent one, so also is that of the angel. That the angel does not necessarily belong to the substance is clear from ch. v. 8, where the twenty-four elders as representatives of the church have golden vials full of incense, which are the prayers of saints. Bengel's remark : " In no book of Scripture are angels so frequently spoken of as this," itself betokens that much here must belong only to the form of the representation. By the altar must be understood here, according to many expositors, the altar of burnt-offering. From this the fire was wont to be taken to kindle the frankincense on the golden altar. Undoubtedly, the altar of burnt-offering is frequently mentioned in Revelation—comp. ch. vi. 9. But here it cannot be thought of. For the altar here receives its more immediate determination from the mention of the incense. On this account alone, unless we should arbitrarily change the incense-pan into one merely of coals, we can understand only the altar of incense to be meant. But even if his having a golden censer did not supply the more exact definition —a circumstance quite overlooked by those who speak of the " indefiniteness," " that the word golden is only found afterwards"—it still could not be the altar of burnt-offering that is mentioned. For, though the altar of burnt-offering might otherwise have been fitly enough understood, yet this is quite unsuitable here, since necessarily, if the altar of burnt-offering had

[1] The origin of this exposition was correctly pointed out by Bossuet: " The Protestants, offended at seeing angelic intercession so clearly established in this passage would have the angel here to be Jesus Christ himself."

been meant, a more exact description would have been needed to prevent it from being identified with the altar of incense mentioned immediately afterwards. The archaeological consideration, however, which has led to the idea of the altar of burnt-offering being meant, is an entirely groundless one. Even in Lev. xvi. 12, "And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar, *which stands before the Lord*, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil, and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord," the incense-pan was filled with coals from off the incense-altar. The implement with which the angel comes forth, places his work immediately before us. Bengel: "A golden censer, this was a sign and instrument of what the angel had to do." Much incense was given to the angel. Bengel: "A mighty power was to be formed, whence again was to arise a mighty operation, and a movement extending far and wide." The object of the *prayers* of the saints is more exactly defined here by the connection, by the starting-point and the result. Accordingly, by the prayers are to be understood such as those in Joel ii. 17, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them;" in Ps. ix. 19, "Arise, O Lord, let not man prevail; let the heathen be judged in thy sight;" in Ps. lxxix. 11, 12, "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee, according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die. And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord." According to ch. v. 8 frankincense is prayer; so here also by ver. 4. Hence everything *beside* the frankincense and the prayers is to be avoided here. That suits well to the earthly, but not to the heavenly sanctuary. The frankincense should be regarded not as an addition to the prayers, but we should explain: frankincense, importing the prayers which are offered in and along with it. When the explanation is given: which was required for their behoof, so that the prayers might be accepted, then the collateral and unsuitable idea is introduced, that the angel had then merely the frankincense, and to the saints belonged the prayers. We should also have to separate the prayers here from those in ver. 4; and the angel should

have an abnormal agency ascribed to him. For, that the prayers of the saints required a presentation at the hands of the angel, is an unscriptural representation. It is opposed even by ch. v. 8, where no mention is made of an angel. But the explanation, that he *contributed* somewhat to the prayers of the saints, is still more objectionable. It is not an addition, but a gift that is spoken of. Instead of: to the prayers, it might also have been, the prayers, τὰς προσευχάς. Only there would then have been a complete overlooking of the embodiment of prayer as frankincense, and in the place of the symbol there would have stood the figure.—Bengel: "We have remarked of the saints at ch. v. 8, that by this name are denoted alike the saints on earth and in heaven. And because it is said expressly here, 'of *all* saints,' we understand both to be meant, especially since what was prayed for concerns the saints both on earth and in heaven. There would also be a gap between the angel and the saints in heaven, if the saints in heaven were excluded." From the circumstance of the angel acting in behalf of the saints, one might conclude with some reason, that respect was not had to the heavenly portion of them; if these had been taken into account, they could, without the mediation of an angel, have represented themselves and the saints upon earth. It is, however, to be observed, that the position of the angel here is a double-sided one, that he not merely causes the incense of the prayers of the saints to ascend, but also the fire of God's wrath to come down. This combined agency is suited only to an angel.—The golden altar is represented as *standing* before the throne. That the veil is to be understood as also existing here, appears from ch. xi. 19, xv. 5. It shall only be uplifted, when the glory of the Lord will shew itself through great catastrophes in unveiled splendour. Even under the New Testament, and after the work of reconciliation has been effected, the infinite distance still remains between the Creator and the creature, God remains the unapproachable and the holy.—There is no reason for supposing that only the altar of incense, and not the whole of the heavenly sanctuary, was disclosed to the Seer; according to his point of view, which fashioned itself after the personal eye-sight of the temple at Jerusalem, there was certainly present to his mind an undivided whole. Indeed, it is said expressly here, that the altar was before the

throne. Therefore, beside the sanctuary, in which was the altar of incense, there must also have been the Most Holy Place.

Ver. 4. *And the smoke of the incense went up to the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God. To the prayers*, importing these, which were presented in and with the frankincense.[1]

Ver. 5. *And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar, and poured it out upon the earth. And there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and earthquakes.* Bengel: "Frankincense and prayer draw a great deal after it: it is acceptable, it will be heard; God then causes his righteous judgments to go forth, for a terror to the world, for the discomfiture of his enemies, and for the advancement of his kingdom." The angel exercises the function of a days-man, מליץ, Job xxxiii. 23. In ver. 3 and 4 he represented the church, and brought its petitions before God. Here he fulfils the second part of his office. He is the medium of communication in respect to God's answer to the requests of the church. In fulfilment of his commission, he throws God's fire down upon the earth. According to John i. 52, "From henceforth ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man" (comp. Gen. xxviii. 12), the angels first ascend up from Christ in his state of humiliation, and hence also from his militant church, bringing their petitions and prayers before the throne of God; and then they descend down and bring the answer and the help and the vengeance on the enemies.—The internal connection between the fiery prayer, and the fiery indignation which is to consume the adversaries (Heb. x. 27), is shadowed forth by the circumstance, that of the same fire of the altar, with which the frankincense was kindled, there was taken and thrown upon the earth. By the first use of the fire in kindling the frankincense, it was in a manner consecrated for the second. Fire is here, as usually in the Apocalypse (comp. on iv. 5), the symbol of the holy wrath and judgment of God.[2]—The fire, the voices, &c., have

1 The ταῖς προσευχαῖς are related to the θυμιαμάτων, exactly as לנפשתיכם, in Gen. ix. 5, to דמכם, your blood to your souls, importing or being as good as these—your blood, that is, your souls.

2 Ezek. x. 2, ss., is not, with Vitringa, to be compared. The fire, which the man clothed in linen there takes out of the midst of the wheels of the Cherubim, is not, as here, a symbolical representation of the wrath of God, but it is the elementary fire. For

here only a typical, a prophetical character. The fulfilment of the prophecy begins with the first trumpet and closes with the last; comp. ch. xi. 19. In ch. iv. 5 the voices, lightnings, and thunders are likewise, not the judgment itself, but the matter-of-fact or symbolical announcement of it. The seven seals are the realization of that announcement. See what is said there respecting the voices, lightnings, and thunders. Here the earthquake is besides named, as the pre-intimation of great approaching revolutions—comp. on ch. vi. 12.

Ver. 6. *And the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared themselves, to sound.* Bengel: "To the angels, who had the seven vials given them, it is said: Go your ways, xvi. 1, 2. But the angels with the trumpets do not go away; and consequently they remain in their state of preparation, and even when they sound, still stand before God." The prayers of the saints are a necessary pre-existing condition of their preparing themselves.—The angels do not inflict the punishment, they merely announce it. Only at the sixth plague there is found, by way of exception, an active angelic agency. The angel first blows, then he looses the four angels that were bound by the great river Euphrates. Even there, however, the angel with the trumpet is not God's proper instrument for inflicting punishment, but the four angels are so.

Ver. 7. *And the first (angel) sounded. And there was a hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth. And the third part of the earth was burnt, and the third part of the trees was burnt, and all green grass was burnt.* John beholds concentrated in a great and fiery hail-storm the desolations of the war, which through the course of centuries constantly bursts forth anew against the world that is at enmity with God. The prototype was the seventh plague, that fell upon Pharaoh, the malignant enemy of the people of God, whom God raised up, that he might shew his power, and have his name proclaimed throughout the earth—the first type of the world-power, on which God's avenging might manifested itself, as a prelude to

the setting on fire and burning of the city must there be indicated. The wheels of the Cherubim denote the powers of nature, primarily the wind (comp. ch. x. 13), but then also the fire. The Cherub supplies the fire: the earth presents heaven with the material for its judgments.

all the succeeding judgments, which he should hereafter execute for the benefit of his kingdom. "And the Lord," it is said in Ex. ix., "caused it to rain hail over the land of Egypt. And there was hail and fire mingled with the hail. . . . And the hail smote all the grass of the field, and brake all the trees of the field."—The fire is here, according to ver. 8 and 9, not the expression of the wrath of God, but the fire of wrath and war, which was certainly kindled by the anger of God.—The "mingled with blood" gives for both the hail and the fire the more specific determination—shews, that the storm of hail and the fire are emblems of war in its desolating and consuming property.[1] Different plagues could not, as Vitringa supposes, be denoted by hail, fire, and blood. He conceives the hail to indicate famine, the fire pestilence, the blood war. In that case we should be thrown upon conjecture in the two first. Then, in the representation of the effects, it could not be simply the being burnt that would be mentioned. It is a further objection, that all the other plagues in this group bear a simple character, and that they have generally to do with war; and so, indeed, that the difference in the particular trumpets only consists in the diversity of the symbols. The same matter is represented in a series of manifold, frightful images, which should fill the mind and fancy with holy dread before the Lord, as going to manifest himself in the approaching war of the world.—This prophecy is not more definite than that of our Lord, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars," and "nation shall rise against nation."[2] Viewed as a special prediction, it would be very defective, and would fail in its end. As it has respect to the whole earth, this shews that we are not to limit it to any single war, but that we have, so to speak, a species before us personified as an individual. All wars bear a particular character. A limitation exists only in the starting-point of the book. According to this, the scourge of war comes into

1 Bossuet: "The desolation is vividly represented by the comparison of a beautiful and rich country, which is laid waste by hail." Bengel: "A mighty, compact, widespread, sudden irruption and calamity." Mede: "John has mingled blood contrary to nature, that he might indicate how the whole of this image points to slaughter."

2 Vitringa was upon the right track when he remarked: "It is perhaps not improper to suppose, that this trumpet does not unfold to us some divine judgment upon the Roman empire of one period, but a certain species of divine judgment, to be expected at various periods after the times of John."

consideration only in so far as it respects the opposition of the heathen world to the kingdom of Christ, with which ch. ix. 20 agrees. Hence the event, to which Bengel refers this prophecy as a special prediction, the Jewish war under Trajan and Hadrian, does not at all come within it. The compass of this judgment reaches as far as the opposition of the earth to heaven, which always calls forth a reaction on the part of the latter—as far as the opposition of the heathen world to the kingdom of God. But since this in the sequel does not continue within the limits of the Roman empire, since afterwards the ten kings trod in this respect in its footsteps, and still again after the thousand years of Christ's dominion, the great party of Gog and Magog, it would be arbitrary here to confine the representation of punishment to the Roman empire. This, however, is to step beyond the circle of this group, which, like the preceding one, still knows nothing except the Roman empire.—As hail, fire, and blood, are employed to represent the judgment, the effect may be described by a single verb, which has immediate respect to the image of fire. The object of the judgment is the whole earth; but only a *third* part of the earth is destroyed by it, because it is still not the final judgment.—The clause: and the third part of the earth was burnt, which is wanting in Luther, is necessary on this account alone, because the third part of the earth here forms the contrast to the third part of the sea, the rivers, the sun in what follows. The threefold division of the destroyed corresponds to the threefold division of the instruments of destruction. The following context describes more exactly what on the earth was affected by the burning. The omission in a few manuscripts, and these not important, has been occasioned merely by the resemblance of the three sentences.—By the *trees* are denoted the high and mighty. In the Old Testament the image had become quite an established one. The *grass* indicates the people, according to Isa. xl. 7, "Surely the people is grass." Trees and grass occur also in ch. ix. 4, as a designation of the high and low, princes and subjects. It is better to refer the predicate *green* to the cheerful bloom and prosperity, which was to continue till the very moment of the plague's bursting forth (comp. Job v. 25; Ps. lxxii. 16), than to the freshness of youth. With the grass also the third part only

is to be understood as being burnt. In the same way, with a limitation determined by the context, the *all* is frequently found in the account given of the Egyptian plagues.

Ver. 8. *And the second angel sounded. And like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea. And the third part of the sea became blood.* Ver. 9. *And the third part of the living creatures in the sea died, and the third part of the ships was burnt.* The person who *throws* is God, who visits the sins of an apostate and antichristian world. The expression: like a great mountain, indicates that we are not to stand at the outward appearance, are not to think of a natural mountain. "Thus I saw the horses in *the vision*," in ch. ix. 17, corresponds. In the Old Testament *mountains* had come to be used as a common symbol of kingdoms; see, for example, Ps. lxxvi. 4, "Thou art more glorious and excellent than the plunder-mountains," mighty peoples that are set on plunder, despoiling kingdoms, lxviii. 16, lxv. 6. In Zech. iv. 7 the great mountain before Zerubbabel was the Persian kingdom, which set itself against the building of the temple. In ch. xvii. 9 of this book the seven mountains are seven kingdoms. The symbolical action in ch. xviii. 21, also rests upon the symbolical signification of a mountain, and there, as in the original passage, Jer. li. 63, 64 (comp. also Dan. ii. 35), the mountain, the symbol of the mighty kingdom, is represented by the great stone, and the sea of the peoples, out of which Babylon had risen up with great power in the time of prosperity, but into which she now again sunk down, by the Euphrates.—The great mountain *burns with fire*. The fire is the fire of wrath, the lust of war and conquest. Allusion is made to Jer. li. 25, where it is said in reference to the Chaldean empire, "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth: I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make of thee a *burnt* mountain." Out of the burning mountain there is made in just recompense a burnt mountain, according to the word, "As he has done, so shall it be done to him."—The great mountain burning with fire is cast into the sea. The sea, in Scripture, generally and specially in the Apocalypse, is the common symbol of the world and the nations—comp. on ch. vi. 14, xiii. 1, xvii. 15. Mountain and sea

are connected together, as here, in Ps. xlvi. 2, 3, "Therefore we are not afraid, though the earth be changed, and mountains shake in the heart of the sea, (though) its waters rage, foam, mountains tremble through its loftiness," comp. Ps. lxv. 6, 7, Matth. xxi. 21. The meaning, therefore, of the symbolical representation is this: The apostate world shall be punished by war and conquest, a kingdom greedy of plunder shall be itself plundered. Bengel remarks: "Here, therefore, the invasion of the Roman empire by foreign nations, and the barbarians, as they were called, is indicated. About the year 250 the warlike Goths made an expedition into the Roman dominions, and from that time the roving incursions and inroads of such tribes never ceased, till they had, as it were, incorporated themselves with the Roman empire." The only fault in this exposition is, that the fulfilment is sought in an event, which can only be regarded as a particular fulfilment, instead of perceiving that in reality we have here an entire species of divine judgments before us, and that the fulfilment of this prophecy is to be considered as still in progress That we have here to do not specially and exclusively with the Roman empire, to which undoubtedly the truth in the prophecy more immediately bore respect, is evident alone from the symbol of the sea. The waters, according to the explanation given by the Seer himself in ch. xvii. 15, are "peoples and multitudes, and nations and tongues."—In consequence of the sinking of the mountain in the sea the third part of the sea becomes *blood*. In the first Egyptian plague, Ex. vii. 20, 21, it is said, "And all the water that was in the Nile was changed into blood, and the fish that were in the Nile died." And that we have here a reference to that plague, which was a symbolical pre-intimation of the last, the killing of the first-born in Egypt, is plain from the circumstance of the blood and the dying of the fish being in both places alike connected together. The third part of the living creatures that were in the sea died. In the further extension of the symbol of the sea men appear also in the Old Testament under the image of the living creatures in the sea. What in Ps. civ. 25 is said of the natural sea, "Here is the great and wide sea, wherein are creeping things innumerable, small beasts with great," is poetically regarded as an image of what is to be found in the sea of the world. Isaiah

in ch. xxvii. 1 denotes the possessor of the world-power as the dragon that is in the sea. In Hab. ii. 14—17, the men who were involved in destruction by the Chaldean thirst for conquest appear as fish in the sea, which the spoiler caught in his net. In Ezek. xxix. 3, 4, Pharaoh the king of Egypt presents himself to the prophet under the image of fish, sticking to his scales. In ch. xlvii. 9, there are in the dead sea, the symbol of the world, very many fish, after it has been quickened by the river of life that flows into it. In the New Testament this symbolical representation is carried still farther. Matt. iv. 18, 19 rests on it, where the Lord said to Peter and Andrew, "I will make you fishers of men," implying that the fish in the sea stand for the world of living men. On it also rests Peter's wonderful draught of fish before the resurrection (Luke, ch. v.), which the Lord applies by telling him that from henceforth he was to catch men; and his wonderful draught after the resurrection (John xxi.) Our Lord's similitude of a net cast into the sea, and gathering fish of all sorts, Matt. xiii. 47, is of the same description. In the passage before us there is a special reference to Ezek. xlvii. 8, 9, "And they (the waters of life) come into the sea, and when they come into the sea the waters of it are made whole. And it comes to pass that every thing that lives, that moves, whithersoever the double-stream comes,[1] shall live and shall have very many fish; and all shall be whole and shall live whither this stream comes." The healing and life-diffusing stream there forms the contrast to the burning and death-bringing mountain here, much as the saving net of Christ stands opposed to the destructive net of the Chaldeans, or the healing tree which Moses put into the water, to the great star, burning like a torch, which makes the waters bitter. There is set before mankind a dreadful alternative. Those who refuse admission to restoring grace are doomed to judgment; such as will not have Jesus for their Saviour must be given up to the destroyer. It is the same person who directs the quickening and refreshing stream into the sea, and throws into it the burning mountain. The energy of love, which is announced by the first, cannot exist without a corresponding energy in righteousness. He

1 The double stream is the strong stream, as in Jer. l. 21, מרתים, the double apostacy, in the time of the Judges, Cushan-Rishathaim, the double wickedness, for the great wickedness. The great mountain here corresponds to the double stream there.

does not abandon the sea and the fish to themselves. Blessing or cursing they must receive from him.—The third part of the *ships* is destroyed. In Ps. civ. 26 we find immediately after the words quoted above, "There go the ships." In symbolic language possessions in common are indicated by ships, as in these many persons are together, having one aim, risk, profit and loss. In the symbolical action in Mark iv. 36, ss., Matt. viii. 23, Luke viii. 22, the ship is the church. Here, where only worldly possessions in common can be spoken of, we are rather to think of cities and villages than states; since for the latter in the Apocalypse there is employed another symbolical term, and one taken from the same category of things—that of *islands*.

Ver. 10. *And the third angel sounded. And there fell a great star from heaven, which burned like a torch, and fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters.* Ver. 11. *And the name of the star is called Wormwood. And the third part of the waters became wormwood. And many men died of the waters, because they had become bitter.* The symbol of the star has, without exception in the Apocalypse, the meaning of ruler—comp. on ch. vi. 13, i. 16, ii. 1, 28, iii. 1, ix. 1, xii. 1, 4. . The star falls *from heaven*, whence comes down every good and perfect gift, and likewise also every destructive result; for the earth is dependent on heaven both as to salvation and perdition. By the falling from heaven here, and again in ch. ix. 1, is denoted the sudden and unexpected nature of the occurrence; comp. also in ver. 8 the expression, he was thrown. The falling here is a different one from that mentioned in ch. vi. 13, and is similar to that of Matth. xxi. 44, "On whomsoever he falls he will grind him to powder." The fire with which the great star burns is the fire of wrath, war, and plunder. As the sea is the image of masses of people, so is the water of rivers an image of affluence, prosperity, and success; see my work on Balaam, at Numb. xxiv. 6, 7, and my Commentary on Ps. cvii. 33—35, the substance of which is: God causes the waters of the world's commerce and prosperity to dry up, but those of his church to flow copiously; or, Babylon shall be parched, the land of the Lord well watered; see also Ps. lxviii. 6, "The rebellious dwell in a dry land." The fountains beside the rivers denote the sources of the prosperity. By another turn of the image the effect might,

instead of an imbittering of the waters, have been described as a drying up of the fountains and springs, and a dying of men from thirst; comp. Isa. l. 2, "Behold at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness; their fish stink, because there is no water, and die for thirst." Here, however, there is also an allusion to Ex. xv. 23—26, "And when they came to Marah they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, what shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree which, when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. And the Lord said, if thou wilt diligently hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, &c., I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee." (This implies that the partaking of the bitter water had already brought sickness upon them.) The star, burning like a torch and named Wormwood, forms here a contrast to the wood with which Moses, as a type of Jesus the Saviour, made the bitter water sweet, just as in ver. 8, 9, the great mountain burning with fire forms the contrast to the mighty life-stream of Ezekiel. For his own people God makes the bitter waters sweet, for the world he makes the sweet waters bitter. Through means of his servants, and by the manifestation of his glory, he shows to his own a healing tree, which, when put into the waters, makes them good; but in righteous judgment to the world, because they would not behold this tree, he throws a great star burning like a torch into the waters, by which they are made bitter.—Several expositors would put poison in place of the bitterness, because bitterness does not kill. But even in nature bitter water produces sickness, according to Ex. xv., and the bitterness of water in a spiritual sense certainly occasions death.

Ver. 12. *And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars, so that their third part was darkened, and the day did not appear for the third part of it, and the night in like manner.* On the shining of the lights of heaven as a symbol of the grace of God and of salvation, and on their darkening as a symbol of troublous and distressing times, see on ch. vi. 12. The

more exact meaning is determined here by the connection. Before and after the subject discoursed of are the sore tribulations of war, and with these the whole group is occupied. So here we can only think of the alarming and distressing times of war. The fifth seal in like manner receives from the context its more precise meaning. Bengel: "If great persons think that such affairs may be committed to them, they shall still find that the judgments of the Almighty are thereby executed and his words fulfilled. Come and behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he has wrought upon the earth. All such things must be considered thus, as they belong to the vast administration of God throughout every region and place of the world. They are no mere news, but they happen under the trumpets of the holy angels, for the glory of the Almighty, through whose righteous judgment it has ever and anon been effected, that the world in its opposition to his kingdom has never been able to succeed. God has always controlled matters so, that space should be obtained at the proper time for his kingdom."—The being *smitten* of God is the cause, the *darkening* is the effect. That a third part of the sun, moon, and stars is smitten, denotes long periods of time, during which distressing times should alternate with better ones. In the *seventh* trumpet the sun, moon, and stars are *wholly* smitten. Here a third part as it were each time covers the watches, or interferes with the function of shining. Two bright sections are followed by a dark one. The very circumstance that this is not applicable to natural things, shews, that we are placed here upon the territory of the symbolical, in which the glittering splendour of the sun, moon, and stars represents a prosperous and happy state, and the darkening of these trouble and distress. By pressing too closely, the rule of the natural sun, etc., commentators have been led into difficulties and constrained significations. Thus, according to Bengel and Züllig, not the third part of the length of the day and of the night must be meant, but the third part of the degree of brightness, which the day and the night have more or less. This exposition cannot stand with the words. The taking away of a third part of the brightness were considerably too small, and would not comport with the heavy tribulations before and after. In the prototype also of the Egyptian plague, Ex. x. 21—23, which is the more nearly related to the passage

before us, as in it the external darkness was but an image of the night of distress, which rested upon Egypt, there were three days of total darkness.

Ver. 13. *And I saw, and heard an eagle flying through the midst of heaven, and saying with a loud voice: Woe, woe to those who dwell upon the earth before the other voices of the trumpets of the three angels, which are yet to sound!* Bengel: "The trumpets of the four first angels were not previously announced with their contents, but in regard to the three last there is now made an anticipatory proclamation. Under the former severe tribulations had already happened; yet they were not called woes. But now great lamentations come one after another, and it is declared, that although the trumpets of the four first angels have reached to all the four ends of the earth, still three woes under the trumpets of the three last must be endured (must *pass by*—for the trumpets are salutary to the church), ere the kingdom of God shines forth under the trumpet of the seventh angel."—The eagle, according to an entire series of passages in the Old Testament, is excellently fitted as a symbol and messenger of the divine judgment, especially of such as consists in hostile oppression. "The Lord will bring against thee," it is said in the original passage, Deut. xxviii. 49, "a people from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle flies." In Hos. viii. 1, it is said, "The trumpet to thy mouth! As an eagle (will the enemy come) upon the house of the Lord, because they have trampled upon my covenant, and have done wickedly against my law." This passage is the more remarkable, as the eagle appears in it, as here, in connection with the trumpet. In Hab. i. 8, "His (the Chaldean's) horsemen come from afar, they fly as an eagle hastens to his prey." In Jer. xlviii. 40 it is said of Nebuchadnezzar, "Behold as an eagle will he fly, and spread out his wings against Moab." In Ezek. xvii. 3 the king of Babylon appears as a great eagle. With these passages of the Old Testament the declaration of our Lord connects itself in Matth. xxiv. 28, "Where the carcase is, there the eagles gather themselves together. Instead of an eagle, several critical helps, which Luther follows, have an angel. But this reading has merely originated in the vicious realism of the exposition, which appears also in the remark of several, who retain *an eagle*, that by this

eagle is to be understood here an angel like to an eagle. For the eagle there is a decided preponderance of external authorities, and even were the evidence on the other side equal, we should still hold the eagle to be the proper word. Bengel expressed his surprise, that angel should not have been found in more copies. Among prosaic copyists and critics no one certainly would have thought of eagle, unless it had originally stood in the text. But, on the other hand, how natural it was to displace the eagle, may appear from the remark of Züllig: "We could very well dispense with the marvellous speaking eagle." If an angel had been the subject, he would have been mentioned as *another* angel; comp. viii. 3, vii. 2, xiv. 6, 8, 9. Not less stumbling than the speaking eagle must be the voice from the four horns of the altar, in ch. ix. 13, to the realistic mode of exposition, and the song of praise from all the creatures in ch. v. It is quite fitting that such hard stumbling-blocks should be thrown in the way of such a style of exposition. It should teach men to be less opposed elsewhere to the ideal interpretation, where matters do not lie so much on the surface—to perceive, for example, that the angels themselves also in the Apocalypse are often but the substratum for the kind of representation given, as in viii. 3, ix. 14. The *flying* is not decisive for either of the two readings. It is used of the eagle in ch. iv. 7, and of the angel in ch. xiv. 6. The eagle here forms a contrast to the *dove* in John i. 32. Those cannot have had the dove coming down upon them, to whom the eagle is sent.—John sees the eagle flying in the midst of heaven. The space in the midst of heaven is here and in ch. xiv. 6 quite suitable for a message which must be heard by the whole earth. In ch. xix. 17 also it is equally suitable. There an angel stands in the sun, doubtless because that is the loftiest position and radiates in all directions, and calls to all birds flying in the midst of heaven, round where he himself stands.[1]—Whether the *οὐαί*, woe, should remind one of the croaking of the raven, as Hofmann thinks, we leave undecided.

Ch. ix.—We have in ch. ix. 1—12 the fifth trumpet, the first woe. A new frightful image of war, as the awful scourge with

[1] These are the three passages in the Revelation where the *μεσουράνημα* occurs. Ewald's exposition of the space between heaven and earth is against the usage. *Μεσουρανέω* always signifies in medio s. umbilico coeli sum, see Stephani Thes. ed. Paris.

which God chastises the apostate world: A star fallen from heaven with locusts. First there is the appearance of the locusts; then the injury they occasion, ver. 3—6. After this we have a description of them, ver. 7—10, which again at the close connects itself with what is the chief point in them, the injury they occasion. And the close of the whole leads back to the first beginning, the *leader* of the locusts, ver. 11. There is only added farther in ver. 12 a short sentence placing a boundary-line between this trumpet and the next. The absence of all individual traits shews that here also we have not the prediction of a particular historical event, but a lively and vivid image of the tribulations of war generally.

Ver. 1. *And the fifth angel sounded. And I saw a star fallen from heaven upon the earth, and to him was given the key of the pit of the abyss.* The star here, as throughout the Apocalypse, denotes a ruler—see on ch. viii. 10. If by this star an angel were at once denoted (Ewald), the pains, that might be connected with the exposition of a book written with so much regularity, would be in vain. But the ruler is here no single historical person; as appears from the want of all individual traits and the whole general and introductory character of the groups of the seven seals and the seven trumpets, in which there is to be found no special reference to those phases of the world-power, by which the church was then oppressed. The ruler is an ideal person, who appears in history in a whole series of real individuals. The last great embodiment of this star was Napoleon. But he shall not remain the last. How adverse the historising mode of exposition is to the profitable understanding of the passage is clear from the words with which Bengel introduces his thoughts upon this section. "The text before us may indeed be regarded as having little edification for us, because a woe is described in it which is already long since past; and if the prophecy plainly treated of such things, we should not expect to derive great profit from the consideration of it." In regard to the falling of the star from heaven, what has been already remarked at ch. viii. 10 is quite applicable: it is a non-essential distinction that there the Seer beholds the star as he falls, here after he has fallen. It is a falling like that of the stone which was cut out without hands, and which struck the

image on its feet, and ground them to pieces, Dan. ii. 34. What the Lord says of *his* kingdom, that it is not of this world, is true in a certain sense of all, even of those of barbaric plunderers. All come down from heaven upon earth; as, indeed, heaven and hell generally have a signification of which the superficial race of the present time little dream. It is a different sort of falling from that of Satan from heaven, Luke x. 18 (comp. here ch. xii.), a passage that is here unseasonably compared by Vitringa, and so separates, what ought to have been indissolubly joined, the passage before us and that of ch. viii. 10. That the key was given to the star shows that the appearance of a star was intermingled with that of the human form. The abyss, properly the bottomless deep, is a strong poetical designation of hell, identical with Hades, by which in the New Testament, and especially in the Apocalypse, only hell is meant; comp. on ch. vi. 8.[1] The abyss appears in the New Testament as the receptacle of demons, Luke viii. 31, and of Satan, Rev. xx. 2 (for there Satan is only confined in his proper place of abode), the source and centre of demoniacal influence upon the earth, ch. xi. 7, xvii. 8, and here ver. 1—11. How frightful when the powers of darkness, which dwell in that horrid abyss, issue forth upon this upper world! But the well-pit of the abyss is the communication through which the lower world is connected with the earth and opens out toward the earth. Such a communication is poetically referred to in Ps. lv. 23, "And thou, O Lord, wilt throw them into the well-pit of the grave." There the wicked are sunk down through the medium of the well-pit into hell, as in ancient times such a well-pit of hell disclosed itself to swallow up Korah (to which that passage in the Psalm refers); here, through the medium of the well-pit opened by the star from heaven, who, according to ver. 11, is also the angel of the abyss, the evil spirit ascends from hell to the earth.[2] If through men's guilt the connection between heaven and earth is dissolved—if the earth shuts itself out from heaven by proclaiming its ungodliness, in righteous judgment hell shall

[1] To the abyss corresponds in the Old Testament בּוֹר, grave, as a poetical designation of Scheol, comp. Ps. xxviii. 1, xxx. 3, lxxxviii. 4; Isa. xiv. 15.

[2] This passage at any rate must not be separated from Ps. lv. 23. If we should there, less properly, understand by the well-pit of the grave Scheol itself, deep as a well-pit, we must also understand the same by it here. The opening, the orifice, cannot, however, be marked by φρέαρ, which corresponds to the Heb. בְּאֵר.

be opened by heaven, and in the place of human wickedness and for its punishment there shall come that of demons. This is brought in by particular Satanic individuals, angels or messengers from hell. These are set by God in the fitting positions where they have the opportunity of spreading through a wide circle the hellish spirit. As heaven, so also hell is opened by particular personages, who are, as it were, an incarnation of the hellish spirit. Bossuet: "Hell does not open of itself; it is always some false teacher that sets it open." *Here*, however, it is a different incarnation of the hellish principle that comes primarily into consideration.[1]

Ver. 2. *And he opened the well-pit of the abyss. And there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great oven; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.* The smoke denotes the hellish spirit which penetrates to the earth—comp. xvi. 13—especially the Cainite spirit of brotherly hatred. For the smoke is the product of fire, as Bengel has remarked, "Where there is smoke, there also is fire, with flames or without them. And of what sort the fire is, of the same sort is the smoke, good or bad, salutary or hurtful." But the fire denotes rage and hatred, the thirst of destruction.—The smoke is described as very thick. As Bengel says, "Dense masses issue forth one after another, which spread themselves far and wide, and again intermingle with each other, so that the darkness always becomes greater." The smoke like that of an oven is from Gen. xix. 28, Ex. xix. 18, "The mountain was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire; and the smoke thereof went up like the smoke of an oven." This is a quite different smoke from the smoke of the frankincense, which is the prayers of saints, and which rises from earth to heaven; comp. ch. viii. 4. But where this smoke fails, or where it ascends *against* any one, there constantly bursts forth that hellish smoke. —The darkening of the sun and the firmament here also denotes the sad and distressing times, which come upon the earth in con-

1 The aberrations of the older polemical exegesis meet us here in a very palpable manner. Bellarmin referred the star to Luther,—the locusts to the Lutherans. Scherzer understood by the star the Papacy, by the locusts the Jesuits. Another Lutheran expositor, Affelmann, thought he could recognise the Papacy in the star, and in the locusts the Calvinists.

sequence of the power given to the hellish Cainite spirit. Comp. ch. viii. 12.

Ver. 3. *And out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.* The locusts do not come from hell, but they proceed out of the smoke. *The hellish wrath spirit sends desolating hordes over the earth.* The body, as it were, or the material for the locusts, was previously in existence. But from hell comes the quickening spirit, by which they are first made locusts, with an insatiable thirst for destruction. These locusts do not merely come *after* the smoke, as Vitringa supposes, but in the strictest sense out of the smoke; the smoke is what makes them locusts. Often are invading hosts compared to locusts, which overspread the land. The point of comparison is first the multitude, from which locusts in Hebrew derive their name; then the sudden inroad and the desolation. In Judg. vi. 5, comp. vii. 12, it is said of the hosts of the Midianites, Amalekites, and the children of the east, "And they came like the locusts for multitude, and came to lay waste the land." In Jer. xlvi. 23 we read of the hostile armies that fall upon Egypt, "They are more than the locusts, and they have no number." In Jer. li. 27, "Cause the horses to come upon them (Babylon), like the horrible lickers," a poetical description of the locusts on account of their desolations; comp. Ps. cv. 34, 35, "He spake, there came locusts and lickers without number; and they ate all the grass in the land, and ate the fruit of their field." In Judith ii. 20, it is said, "And Holofernes went forth with the whole host . . which covered the ground like locusts." In these passages there is found an explictly stated comparison. From them there is but a step to another, in which a hostile irruption should be simply represented under the symbol of the plague of locusts. These representations have a special starting-point in the locust-devastation in Egypt, Ex. x. The Egyptian plagues were justly considered as prophecies in action, and men delighted to represent the analogous future under the image of the past, in which it had its pledge. Amos in ch. vii. 1—3 beheld the approaching divine judgment, which was to consist of a hostile invasion, under the image of a swarm of locusts, as he does in ver. 4 under the image of a fire, and in ver. 7 under that of a plumb line. Substantially the whole three convey one meaning.

This is announced in ver. 9 by the words, "and the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." But this symbolical representation is to be found at the greatest length in Joel i. 1—ii. 18, where see the Christology. Now, that in the passage before us literal locusts cannot be understood, is clear as day. These would form a very strange exception in a quite symbolical connection, along with stars and smoke.[1] But if the description must be understood symbolically, the only admissible reference is to a hostile devastation. For, 1. throughout Scripture, wherever locusts are spoken of in a figurative manner, a hostile devastation is denoted by them. The locusts never stand as a designation of "indeterminate frightful punishments and plagues." Under the related image also of swarms of flies and bees hordes of enemies are denoted in Scripture, comp. Isa. vii. 18; Deut. i. 44; Ps. cxviii. 12. 2. We stand here in the midst of a warlike connection. The four preceding trumpets announce hostile devastations, as do also those that follow. A ruler and conqueror is indicated by the star fallen from heaven, who opens hell and sends forth the smoke, out of which the locusts proceed, identical with the angel of the abyss in ver. 11, who is called the king of the locusts. 3. The succeeding trumpets present such important and intentional agreements with this, that the subject in each must be the same; that if in these we admit the reference to be to hostile devastations, we cannot deny it to be so here also. To the horses prepared for war here in ver. 7 correspond in ver. 16 the myriads of horsemen, to the lions teeth in ver. 8, the heads of lions in ver. 17; coats of mail are mentioned alike in ver. 9 and ver. 17; and the tails like scorpions in ver. 10 have their correspondence in the tails like those of serpents in ver. 19. 4. The natural locusts are destructive to plants and trees—comp. Ex. x. 15. In this respect a preparation was made for the figurative representation here by the employment, in ch. viii. 7, of the

1 Vitringa: "He describes them by such attributes as do not belong to actual locusts; as, that they were produced by smoke, issuing not out of some sort of pool but out of an abyss; that they had tails with stings, like scorpions; that they hurt men; that they had golden crowns on their heads; that they had a human face and a woman's hair; and at last had a leader set over them, the angel of the abyss."

green grass and the trees in a figurative sense, as a designation of the people and persons of distinction. Farther, the point of comparison between the locusts and the invading hordes of enemies is only that which has now been described. Neither here, nor in the fundamental passages of the Old Testament, is there the least trace of any resemblance in form between the horses and the locusts being taken into account. Several expositors, like Ewald, by their arbitrary suppositions, impute in this respect, to the prophet, a sort of playful trifling, unworthy of a man of God. The image of the locusts is not sufficiently comprehensive and marked for the prophet. In particular, the idea of malice was not strongly enough represented by the symbol. He, therefore, adds to it that of scorpions, which both in the Old and the New Testament are ill reported of.[1] When it is said that power was given to them, as the scorpions of the earth have power, the mode of representation is based on the truth, that even in nature everything destructive has its mission from God, and only in consequence and by virtue of this is its pernicious energy developed —comp. Gen. iii. 17, where the earth is cursed for man's sin, and Isa. ch. xi., according to which in the "regeneration" of the earth, when righteousness dwells on it, everything violent and destructive shall vanish from it. The scorpions of the earth form the contrast to these scorpion-like locusts sent forth from hell. If we had, not a holy seer, but a natural philosopher before us, we might have supposed that land scorpions are here spoken of, as contradistinguished from the (rather obscure) water scorpions, the existence of which was probably unknown to John. Scripture everywhere knows only of land scorpions. It was quite pardonable in the great author of the work on the beasts of Scripture (Bochart), to suffer himself to be here carried away by his leanings to natural history; but expositors should have exercised more foresight.

Ver. 4. *And it was said to them, that they should not hurt the grass on the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, save only the men who had not the seal of God on their foreheads.* The trees correspond in ch. vii. 1, 3, to the kings, nobles, etc., in ch. vi. 15. Trees and grass denote in ch. viii. 7, the high and

1 The venomous tail of scorpions is, according to Pliny, L. vi. c. 28, semper in ictu, nulloque momento meditari cessat ne quando desit occasioni.

the low, princes and subjects. It does not mean the *men*, but *the* men; for men are also denoted by the grass and the trees. By these are not meant, as Vitringa supposes, believers, but men generally. The reference to believers is first given by the limitation that follows. The human family falls into the two great divisions of the sealed, and those who have not the seal of God on their foreheads. That all excepting the sealed appear here as the object of the divine judgment, shews plainly that the sealed out of the tribes of Israel, in ch. vii., comprehend all believers. How it is to be understood that believers are here exempted from the plagues which alight upon the whole world, we have already considered at ch. vii. St Paul says, "All things work together for good to those that love God;" and Paul Gerhardt sings in respect to the thirty years' war, that "as faithful mothers in severe storms upon earth anxiously guard and keep their little ones, so also does God, when tribulation and distress arise, press his children to his bosom." By the common interpretation, the grass, etc., here, must be understood of things in nature, which are preyed upon by locusts. But such a limitation in respect to the natural locust, is rather cold, as the whole representation plainly enough shews, that these are not to be brought into view. Further, since trees and grass occur so shortly before in the figurative sense, it was the more necessary to indicate by the choice of some particle expressing the opposite, that the figurative sense was here to be excluded. Instead of: save only, besides (comp. Ex. ix. 26, "only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel dwelt, there was no hail"), there should then rather have been a *but*, which Luther certainly has.

Ver. 5. *And it was given to them, that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months; and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it strikes a man.* The *not killing* is not to be understood as if none were to be killed; but those who are not killed alone draw attention, because their number is much the greater and their lot the harder, ver. 6. The signification of the *five months* may here be certainly determined from the circumstance, that in the four first trumpets, and likewise in the sixth, the third part of men are mentioned as the object of the plagues, but here not so. Hence the fifth here must have the same design of stamping this trumpet as incomplete in

its character as compared with the seventh. For this purpose the fifth number was well adapted. For it is throughout the signature of the half, the incomplete, as the broken ten. Five months are named, because only the five in relation to the twelve months of the year, produces the idea of a proportionately long continuance and frightfulness, which was the thing more immediately to be rendered palpable. It was necessary to denote a very long period, and still not the longest. Against the reference of the five months to the 150 days of the flood, Gen. vii. 24, Mark has already objected that the waters were much longer upon the earth. The "five months of the existence of the natural locust" have no place in natural history, and all searching into the natural history of locusts must here be regarded as out of place. Finally, in respect to Hofmann's supposition of a reference to the five sins in ver. xx. 21, we reply, that there five sins are not named, but first a tenfold sin against the first table, and then four against the second. They themselves resembled scorpions in their malicious disposition to torment men (comp. Ez. ii. 6, "Thou dwellest among scorpions"), and, therefore, by a righteous judgment of heaven, their torment becomes like the torment inflicted by a scorpion.

Ver. 6. *And in those days shall men seek death and not find it; they shall desire to die, and death will flee from them.* With what earnestness the word is spoken appears from its repetition a second time. Ch. vi. 16, in the vision of the seals is parallel, and the original passage is Jer. viii. 3, "And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the Lord."

Ver. 7. *And the locusts are like horses, which are prepared for war, and upon their heads as crowns, like gold,*[1] *and their faces like the face of men.* The first clause is literally: And the likenesses of the locusts are like. This is put for: as regards their likeness or resemblance, they are like. The prefixing "the likeness" shows, that the Seer now passes on to this point; he leaves other things concerning them, in order to describe their

[1] Instead of the reading ὅμοιοι χρυσῷ, which we have followed with Luther, others have χρυσοῖ. But this reading has probably arisen from a feeling of unsuitableness in the repetition of the simple *likeness*, overlooking how common also in Ezekiel are such accumulated indications of difference between the vision and the reality.

likeness. Four verses are devoted to this. First we have their likeness in regard to their appearance as a whole, then only particular features. The *horses* are to be understood as occupied by their riders, so that they correspond to the horsemen in ver. 16. Only when the riders sit upon them, are they prepared for war; and in the fundamental passage also, Joel ii. 4, "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses, and as horsemen so shall they run," the horse from the parallelism is not to be thought of without, but with his rider. The cavalry force is among barbarous people the most important, and always is that which, in appearance, is the most frightful, hence the fittest for representing the whole war-like force. In the Old Testament representations also of impending divine judgments by means of hostile armies, the cavalry plays a prominent part; comp., for example, Hab. i. 8, "Their horses are swifter than the leopards, and more fierce than the evening wolves; and their horsemen shall spread themselves, their horsemen come from far; they fly as the eagle that hastes to eat." We have here an express statement from the Seer as to what we should understand by the locusts. That only the *likeness* is spoken of is to be explained from the desire of throwing over the whole the veil of the locust-symbol. This veil is a transparent one. Behind the slender covering the real nature of the thing meant appears, yet so that there always remains an infusion of the symbol and the reality into each other. They appear like locusts, and yet also like a frightful mass of horses and horsemen.—The *crown* in Revelation is always the mark of royal dignity, dominion—comp. ii. 10, iii. 11, iv. 4, vi. 2, xii. 1, xiv. 14. From their having crowns upon their head, they are marked out as the sovereign people. The crowns refer to the relation in which the party represented stood to strangers, much as in the Old and the New Testament Israel is designated as a royal people on account of its dominion—comp. on ch. i. 6. To the crowns correspond the designation of their leader as the star, that has fallen from heaven to the earth. In *his* dominion their's also is involved, as in the kingly dignity of Christ that also of believers. For he is the head, they are the members. In respect to the inhabitants of the plundered countries they have the feeling of kings, while those feel as subjects.—Their faces resemble those of men, since, dreadful to behold, the fierce countenance of a man looks through

the visage of the locust. In reality they were human countenances.

Ver. 8. *And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as those of lions.* Among the Greeks and Romans it was the usual practice to cut the hair. (It was certainly otherwise in half-barbarous times, comp. Hom. Il. ii. 11.) Plutarch says in the Quaest. Rom.: "Custom requires men to cut the hair, but with the women to let it grow."[1] How deeply-rooted this custom was, appears from 1 Cor. xi. 14, 15. Among the civilised Egyptians the wearing of long hair was reckoned a characteristic mark of barbarism—see my work on Egypt and the books of Moses, p. 28. That among the Israelites the polling of the hair belonged to social life, is evident from the cultivation of the hair in the Nazarites being appointed as a mark of their separation from the world; and on the same ground the Egyptians allowed the beard to grow in times of mourning. The barbarous Parthians wore long hair.[2] Hair like women's in length, but kept without order, would present a frightful spectacle. Any one that lets every thing on his body grow as it will, virtually makes himself known as one who gives free scope to his lusts and passions, thinks only of suffering no hindrance to his natural desires. Among us also, again, long hair has become a symbol of savage wildness!—The teeth resembling those of lions, is from Joel i. 6. The comparison suits well the spiritual locusts, raging enemies, but not the natural ones. For the lion cannot possibly be put as a symbol of mere voracity.

Ver. 9. *And they had coats of mail like iron coats of mail, and the rustling of their wings as the rustling of chariots of many horses, running to battle.* The iron coats of mail indicate how difficult it would be to get at these horsemen.[3] The horses here also, as in ver. 7, are to be thought of as occupied by their riders, partly sitting on their saddles, partly on light chariots of

1 See Perizonius on Ælian, Var. Hist. ix. 4.

2 Suetonius Vespas. c. 23: Cum inter prodigia caetera Mausoleum Cæsarum derepente patuisset, et stella in cœlo crinita apparuisset: alterum ad Junium Calvinam e gente Augusti pertinere dicebat: alterum ad Parthorum regem, qui capillatus esset. Aurelius Victor also: Istud, inquit, ad regem Persarum pertinet, cui capillus effusior.

3 Amm. Marcellinus says of the Persians in B. xix. c. 1: Ferreus equitatus campos opplevit; again in B. xxv. c. 1: Erant autem omnes catervae ferratae. And before: Ubi vero primum dies inclaruit, radiantes loricæ limbis circumdatae ferreis, et corrusci thoraces longe prospecti adesse regis copias significabant.

war. The chariots appear as an appurtenance of the cavalry. They were so reckoned in the books of Moses. The combatants on the very small and light Egyptian war-chariots are there described as horsemen, precisely as we are wont to speak of the riding-post, notwithstanding that letter-carriers often use gigs. Comp. Isa. xxi. 7, 9, where riders on chariots are mentioned among the Medo-Persian armies. We must not translate: of many horse-chariots, but only: of the chariots of many horses. The numerousness of the chariots is only to be concluded from the numerousness of the horses. In Joel ii. 5 also the noise of the locusts is compared to the noise of chariots.[1]

Ver. 10. *And they have tails like scorpions, and there are stings in their tails; and their power is to hurt men for five months.* This verse reverts to ver. 3—6, from the description of the locusts to what they were to accomplish. Bengel: "The tails of the locusts are not only like the tails of scorpions, but like the scorpions themselves, as the tails of the horses in ver. 19 with their heads are not only like the tails of serpents, but like the serpents themselves."

Ver. 11. *They have over them as king the angel of the abyss; whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he has the name Apollyon.* Bengel: "Elsewhere locusts have no king, Prov. xxx. 27, but these have one." The star in ver. 1, according to the uniform usage of the Revelation, corresponds to the king. If another king were here meant, then two kings would be ascribed to the locusts. And in that case the respective territories of each would require to be bounded. But we can the less doubt respecting the identity of the king and the star, as the retrogressive movement begins even in ver. 10. As there in connection with the tails of the locusts the subject of ver. 3—6 is resumed, so this verse looks back to ver. 1, 2. We become lost, too, in inexplicable difficulty, whenever we deny the identity of the king and the angel. We cannot think of Satan himself. For Satan has his angels (ch. xii. 7, Matth. xxv. 11), but he is

1 Ewald would delete the ἵππων, De Wette the ἁρμάτων. But such arbitrariness can no longer pass among us. Both the horses and the chariots occur in the original passage, Joel ii. 4, 5. The chariots cannot be dispensed with, because their rattling agrees better with the whirring noise of the locusts than the prancing of horses; nor can the horses, because the multitude of the horsemen and not of the chariots is the proper counterpart to the locusts; comp. on ver. 7.

not himself called an angel. And no trace whatever exists of any other infernal king, who could be simply designated as the angel of the abyss.—The article, which is wanting in Luther, denotes either this angel of the abyss, an ideal person, who becomes manifest in a multitude of real personages, as already known from what had gone before, or as the angel par excellence —comp. ch. iii. 17.—According to the uniform usage of the Apocalypse it is not the messengers, but the angel of the abyss, that is here spoken of, as in Matth. xxv. 41, and here xii. 7, 2 Cor. xii. 7, we read of the angels of the devil, who, according to 2 Pet. ii. 4, Jude ver. 6, reside in the darkness of hell. The name of the higher messengers of hell is transferred to the lower, in order to create a salutary dread of them, as we speak of a corporeal Satan—comp. Matth. xvi. 23. The transference of the name of the heavenly messengers to the earthly in ch. i. 20, is quite analogous. The king has on one side, according to ver. 1, a divine mission. But the hellish one, alone rendered prominent here, was also indicated in ver. 1, 2. For, if he opens the well-pit of hell, and lets out the smoke, he certainly does, apart from the divine mission, a devilish work, what betokens a Satanic disposition, and a hellish employ. Abaddon properly means destruction, and occurs in the Old Testament in connection with death and the grave. Here it appears as a name of him, who has become a kind of personal, embodied destruction, synonymous with Apollyon, the destroyer. Expositors have with reason remarked that the names of Abaddon and Apollyon, the destroyer (certainly the resemblance is striking between this name and Napoleon, who was one of the many incarnations of Apollyon), stand related to the name Jesus. Bengel: "The name of Antichrist stands directly opposed to the name of Christ; and not less directly opposed to the name of Jesus or Saviour is that of Abaddon the destroyer." On those, who despise Jesus, the Saviour, inevitably comes the destroyer. The world has to make its choice between Jesus and Apollyon. If they refuse the one, they must fall into the hands of the other. Bengel says, "Great is the glory of the Son of God, who restrains so many and such diverse enemies, numerous and powerful agents in the kingdom of darkness, lets them loose, and again sets a limit to them. Blessed is the state of those, who stand under the power of Christ. How

needful is it for us to betake for refuge to Christ, and seek our safety under his wings! They who do so, have no need to be afraid either of Abaddon, or of Satan himself and his angels. The evil inflicted under the first woe takes effect on the men, who have not the seal of God; but they, on the other hand, are always in safe keeping, who, as his servants, have the seal and mark of God upon them. However sharp the conflict may be, the Lord will assuredly protect his chosen ones, on whom he has set his mark, and who are sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb."

Ver. 12. *One woe is past; behold! there come two woes more after it.* In ch. ix. 13—21, we have the sixth trumpet, the second woe. Four angels, till now bound in the Euphrates, are set loose, that they may execute the work of God's vengeance. They overspread the earth with an incredible number of horsemen. The third part of men are destroyed. But the world continues still in its impenitence. Since, therefore, they will not turn back to him, who smites them, and seek the Lord of Hosts, they must expect that the word shall again be verified, "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." The world calls aloud for the seventh trumpet, the last woe. For, it is not to be imagined, that God's righteousness shall prove less energetic than men's sinfulness.

Ver. 13. *And the sixth angel sounded. And I heard a voice from the four*[1] *horns of the golden altar, before God,* ver. 14, *which spake to the sixth angel, that had the trumpet, Loose the four angels, bound by the great river Euphrates.* There is not sufficient proof for the view of Bähr (Symbolik des Mos. Cultus I. p. 472), that the horns of the altar have a separate symbolical meaning, and that the altar by means of its four corners is rendered "a manifestation of divine power and blessing." For, that the horn occurs in a series of passages as an image of power and strength, with reference to those animals, whose strength lies in their horns, is not enough for the point in question. There is

1 The reason of the omission of τεσσάρων even in some important authorities (it is omitted in Lachmann and Tischendorf), was given by Bengel: "It might easily be omitted before κεράτων, since both words have the same number of syllables and nearly the same letters." It may be added, that in the Mosaic law the horns of the altar of incense might justly be taken as four in number, though that is not *expressly* said as in the case of the altar of burnt-offering. This circumstance at least shows, that the τεσσάρων would not be lightly shoved in.

nothing to be found in Scripture indicating that this symbolical import was specially ascribed to the horns of the altar. Luke i. 69 does not refer to the horns of the altar, but to Ps. xviii. 2. But Ex. xxx. 10 (comp. Jer. xvii. 1) is against Bähr's view, as there it is enjoined that the altar be purified once every year. This shews, that we must not refer the horns of the altar in a one-sided manner to that which God imparted, but that rather what was presented on the altar, was what primarily culminated in the horns. Many impurities were mingled with the devotions, (comp. Job xvi. 17, Isa. i. 15,) which stood in need of atonement and forgiveness. We may rather suppose, that the horns of the altar come into consideration as that, in which itself runs out—in which all its signification culmniates, as the horn of an animal is its strength and ornament; the *head*, in a manner, of the altar. With this view accords Ex. xxvii. 2, xxxviii. 2, according to which the horns were to be of one piece with the altar, to indicate that they had not a separate meaning of their own, but that the altar only culminated in them. Hence also, it may naturally be explained, how the sacrificial blood should have been sprinkled on the horns, how the slayer of blood should have laid hold of the horns, and in them of the whole altar, and here likewise, how the voice should have proceeded out of the four horns.—The voice is that of the altar itself, and nothing but a vicious realism here, as in the case of the eagle in ch. viii. 13, could have thought of an actual existence. The voice does not come merely out of the region, it comes out of the four horns of the altar itself. In what respect the altar comes into notice here, may be understood from ch. viii. 3. It is the place of "the prayers of saints." It is these which desire the loosing of the four angels bound at the Euphrates, and obtain it. As the angels generally prepared themselves to sound in consequence of the much incense which was presented on the golden altar that is before God, so here, in consequence of the voice out of the altar, the angel looses the four angels bound by the great river Euphrates.—The voice proceeds, not from *one* horn merely, but from all the horns together, because they together formed the head of the altar. At the same time the four number of the horns appear to be not without some respect to the four angels in ver. 14, and the four number of sins in ver. 21. The sins, the

desire of the church, the punishment, all bear the impress of comprehensiveness and intensity. The four number of the sins constitutes the foundation, the four number of the horns and the angels stand related to these as the effect to its cause. But comprehensive as the judgment is, it still bears, like the preceding trumpets, a provisional character in relation to the seventh. *Angels*, without any additional predicate, are always *good* angels. Of such alone can we think here, from the very nature of the case. For, in Scripture it is uniformly the good angels that are employed in punishing the wicked. The reference to them also is confirmed by the analogy of the four angels with the four winds in ch. vii. 1.—That the angels were bound, points to the long-suffering of God, which, up to this time, restrained the punishment, and still gave space for repentance. The signification of the binding was correctly given by Bossuet: "What binds the angels, are the sovereign commands of God." We perceive the truth of this from ver. 15. Their work must have its commencement at a particular moment.—The four number of the angels bears respect to the four ends of the earth. It denotes the universality, the oecumenical character of the divine judgment. This number alone shows, that we are not to think of the angels of particular nations, and the same appears by a comparison of ch. vii. 1.—The Euphrates here, and in ch. xvi. 12, is mentioned as the river, from the regions on the further side of which, during the times of the Old Testament, and through the course of centuries, the scourge of God came forth upon the nearer districts of Asia. It was so, according to Gen. xiv., even in the most ancient times, and afterwards during the ascendancy of the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, and the Persians. In Isa. vii. 20, the king of Assyria is described as a razor, hired by God in the district beyond the Euphrates. The word spoken by Jeremiah in ch. xlvi. 10, must come anew into fulfilment. "And this day shall be to Jehovah the Lord of Hosts, a day of revenge, that he may avenge him of his adversaries, and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood. For the Lord God of Hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates." The epithet *great*, the great river Euphrates, itself points to the Old Testament—comp. Gen. xv. 18; Deut. i. 7; Josh. i. 4. The local designation is hence a merely

apparent one. Not less than the four bound angels does the Euphrates belong to the vision, which ever loves to find the substratum of its representations in events of a similar nature in the past—comp. for example, Isa. xi. 15, 16; Zech. x. 11. All *historizing* interpreters, such, for example, as conceive the Euphrates to be mentioned from being the limits of the Roman empire, or from the dangers with which the Parthians threatened the Romans, apart from the misapprehension implied regarding the trumpets generally, is excluded by the enormous numbers in ver. 16. The subject of discourse in vers. 15, 16 is not the Romans, but men at large.—The angels are to be regarded as the leaders of the great hosts, who assemble under their banners in the regions beyond the Euphrates, the seat, as it were, of God's hosts of war; as in Isa. xiii. 5, Jehovah himself marches forth at the head of his instruments of vengeance to lay waste the whole earth. In the angels the truth is embodied, that those warlike hosts do nothing, but what they are commissioned to execute. The heavenly agency so strongly engages the attention of the Seer, that at first he does not even think of the earthly instruments. In the preceding vision the same thought is rendered manifest by the falling of the star from heaven, which leads on the locusts.—We may understand from the beginning in ver. 13 who they are, against whom the four angels are loosed; they are the persons against whom the prayers of the church, they had persecuted, have gone up. We may also learn it from the conclusion in vers. 20, 21, according to which it is the world sunk in idolatry and the love of sin, which on this account could not but assume a hostile attitude towards the church and believers: for "he who doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved," John iii. 20.

Ver. 15. *And the four angels were loosed, who were prepared for the hour, and day, and month, and year, that they might kill the third part of men.* The preparation proceeds only from God. The thought of such a preparation on the part of God may well encourage the church to bear what she has to suffer from the world. Whenever the set time comes, there will be a changing of places!—The article applies alike to all the four words. The definite period is meant, in which the loosing of the angels was to take effect (Luther has improperly: *an* hour.) They were al-

ready in preparation for that, and when it arrived, after the wickedness of the world had become full, the loosing took place, and they were to begin their work.—An ascent is made from the lower to the higher. When I know, that something has happened about nine o'clock, I know less than if the year had been mentioned to me. In Numb. i 1, Zech. i. 7, Hag. i. 15, also the rise is made from the day to the month, and from this again to the year. Bossuet: "The time being so precisely marked by the prophet, lets us see how exactly God determines the periods."

Ver. 16. *And the number of the army of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand*[1]*; I heard the number of them.* The subject of discourse is the enormous multitude of cavalry. As cavalry produce a very imposing impression, *the whole* of the plundering hordes is here, as in the preceding trumpet, represented under this image, although in reality foot soldiers must be understood to be also included.—The *four hundred millions* exclude all idea of a particular war, and shew that we have here to do only with a personified species. The fundamental passage is Ps. lxviii. 17, "The chariots of God are two myriads, thousands of repetition;" *q.d.* thousands multiplied by thousands, a thousand times a thousand. There it is the *invisible* war-chariots of Jehovah that are spoken of, which we may imagine to be drawn by hosts of angels. But the difference is not an essential one. For, these earthly hosts are as completely dependant on every nod of God, as those heavenly ones. They, too, are led by angels. In both places alike the hosts of God are employed in his service against the world.—He *heard their number*, because it was so great a one, that no one could number it—comp. ch. vii 9.

Ver. 17. *And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having coats of mail of fire and hyacinth and brimstone; and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths went forth fire, and smoke, and sulphur. Thus*, viz., as follows: The horses are here, as also in ver. 7, to be thought of as provided with riders. The description begins with the horsemen and then passes over to their

1 Some MSS. have merely μυριάδες μυριάδων, as in ch. v. 11. Vitringa says justly: "The Holy Spirit elsewhere also uses this expression to denote the greatest possible number, Ps. lxviii. 17."

horses. And them that sat on them, for: namely, them that sat on them. The vision is framed so as to impress on us, what might have been understood of itself, though it is still even to our day not understood by many expositors, that we must distinguish between the substance and the form, under which it appears in the vision. In this everything was *seen*—the internal had to imprint itself on the external, the spiritual receive a body. The wild exasperation, the thirst for murder, the desire of rapine and desolation, are pictorially exhibited in the colours of the coats of mail on the horsemen, and especially in the fire, and smoke, and sulphur which came out of the mouth of their horses: the external representation of their beastly appetite was transferred to the beast part of the host. Even apart from the warning-note, from the kind of invisible N.B. given in the expression, "in the vision," it is scarcely possible to understand, how one should so far misapprehend the nature of the representation, as to conclude from it, that warlike hosts are not meant here. The affirmation, that nothing like actual war is seen here, may be met, as soon as we can distinguish between the reality and the clothing, by the counter affirmation, that every thing does so. And were it not for the multifariousness of the forms employed in the representation, the six trumpets might be all compressed into one.—The signification of the colours of the coats of mail is entirely to be determined by what proceeds out of the mouth of the horses: to the coats of mail of fire corresponds the fire, which must therefore be imaged by them, to the hyacinth-coloured (what is meant is the deep blue hyacinth), the smoke, to the brimstone-like, the sulphur. Bengel: "There is no mixture of a white, clear, peaceful colour."—The lion-heads, fearful and appalling.—The fire is the fire of wrath, the smoke is the inseparable accompaniment of the fire—comp. Ps. xviii. 8, where also, as here, the fire-wrath goes out of the mouth—the (burning) brimstone points to the unpleasant character of this fire: the fire of hell is a fire of brimstone, ch. xiv. 10, xix. 20, xxi. 8. If fire and smoke alone had been mentioned, an honourable wrath might have been indicated, as is plain from Ps. xviii. So that the ingredient of the sulphur here is quite necessary to a complete characteristic.

Ver. 18. *By these three plagues was the third part of men*

killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouth. The *these* refers to the things that had first been named. Without a figure: by their wild spirit of ferocity and murder. The limitation of Bengel is arbitrary, in understanding by the men, "such as lived in those lands, whither the warlike host went." The third part of men upon the whole earth are specified. We have here no gradation in relation to the fifth trumpet. For, the not being killed, is there to be limited to the majority, who here also remain in life; and in ver. 6 there, it is represented, not as the better, but as the worse lot. Here also, remarks Züllig, "by the perishing are to be understood those who have not the seal of God spoken of in ver. 4." And Bengel says: "In the present day there is a great corruption among unbelievers and nominal Christians, in all parts of Christendom, among high and low, and in all conditions of men; but if we could see what in former times has been taken away, we should find that the great God has continually saved out of the corrupt mass a good portion to remain for a seed. Those portions that have been extirpated have for the most part been a bad commodity. In plants one always leaves the best, the largest, and most perfect for seed, so that a good kind may be preserved. What would it come to, if God should leave men to act as they pleased, since with so much to restrain them, they are still so averse to improve? It is, therefore, necessary for the holy angels to blow with their trumpets, that men may learn to fear the Lord, and not be ever contending against him? Lord, when I reflect how thou hast executed judgment in the world, my desire is increased to give thee glory in a truly reverential and submissive spirit."

Ver. 19. *For, the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents, and they have heads, and with these they do hurt.* The clause, stating the power to be in their mouth, serves only as a connecting link with what is still to be said of their tails. The injurious and dreadfully destructive tendency had not been sufficiently represented by what proceeds out of the mouth of the horses. It still farther embodies itself in the symbol of the serpent-tails. Serpents are mentioned here, as in ch. xii. 9, where the devil is called the old serpent, on account of their cunning, malicious wickedness, as op-

posed in some sense to the lions in ver. 17; and agreeing also in this, that the serpents are *behind*, where one suspects no danger. Bengel's remark is rather little: "Whether they make a furious onset, or turn the back, and feign a retreat, they still do hurt." There is no reason for supposing here, with some, a reference to a peculiar sort of serpent, "one that has a short tail, like a head, which the creature uses both for creeping and for discharging venom, as if it had two heads." It is not said of the tails of the serpents, that they had heads, but of the tails of the horses. These resemble serpents, which have grown to the tails, and have the head free for biting.

Ver. 20. *And the rest of the men, who were not killed by these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands that they should worship demons, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and wood, and stone, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk.* Dreadful hardness of the human heart! Rather let all be destroyed than be converted! We may compare in the Old Testament the history of Pharaoh, whose servants said to him in vain, "Dost thou not see, that Egypt is destroyed;" and Isa. ix. 12, "And the people return not to him that smites them, and the Lord of Hosts they seek not." A similar spirit of impenitence under divine judgments is given in ch. xvi. 9, 11, 21. The opposite, however, in the degenerate church, ch. xi. 13.[1] Mark says: "It is to be understood of itself, that when it is said of the rest, they did not repent, the statement is to be confined to the apostates, and is not to be extended to those, whom the Lord has reserved for himself in secret." The proper limitation, however, is rather this, that along side the world, which here is the subject of discourse, the church exists, and is also, indeed, much tainted by the worldly spirit, but by the judgments of the Lord it is awakened to repentance; see ch. xi. We have here a tenfold description of idols, divided by the seven and the three, and the first again by two and five.—That by the works of their hands, it is not actions that are denoted, as some conceive, referring to ch. ii. 22, xvi. 11 (where, however, actions are not spoken of), but works generally, is clear from Deut. iv. 28, "And

[1] The μετανοεῖν uniformly corresponds in the Apocalypse to שוּב. That it should be found ten times in this book, and not once in the other writings of John, is a particular proof of the Old Testament character of the Apocalypse.

ye shall there serve idols, *the works of men's hands*, wood and stone, which see not, and hear not, and eat not, and smell not," Ps. cxv. 4—7, "Their gods are silver and gold, the work of men's hands," cxxxv. 15—17. Further, in the service of idolatry, which those expositors understand to be meant by the works of the hands, the hands are not peculiarly employed. The worship is performed by the whole body. Finally, the repetition of the statement, "they repented not," in ver. 21, is more easily explained, if by the works of the hands the idols are understood. The certainly somewhat hard expression: Repent of the works, is softened by what follows immediately after. According to this it is as much as, repent of their worshipping the works of their hands, demons and idols.—By the demons we can only understand evil spirits, according to the usage of the New Testament. There is no proof of lifeless images being ever meant by the demons. The second passages also, where demons are mentioned in the Apocalypse, ch. xvi. 14, indicates real existences, as there the spirits of demons are spoken of. The worship of idolatry may be viewed in two aspects. In the one it is a rude image-worship. The several heathen gods have no existence beside the material one in their statutes, the work of men's hands. But in the other aspect, the idolatrous service has a demoniacal background. The allurement to give honour to those Elilim, those nonentities, proceeds from the powers of darkness, and since they constitute the spiritual background in the matter, the worship may be regarded as in a measure performed to them. Only a passing notice, however, is taken here of this aspect, and in what follows, the Seer immediately reverts again to the other. All profound investigations into the nature of idol-worship leads to this result. The fearful power, which it wields over the minds of men, is inexplicable without this spiritual background, which is first disclosed to our view in the New Testament, going, as it usually does, more to the bottom of things, while the Old Testament rests more in the material appearance. The apostles, who lived in the midst of heathen objects and relations, were thereby rendered, humanly considered, more competent for this, than those who know of heathenism only from books. The demoniacal character, the infernal origin of the evil, in all the more inveterate aberrations of the human mind, impresses itself on all who have it im-

mediately before their eyes, and are capable of profound inquiries into the subject. However, the demoniacal nature of the Revolution and the rage for freedom has opened many eyes in our days, that were hitherto shut, to perceive the existence of a kingdom of darkness. It is quite similar in respect to the worship of idolatry. Airy phantoms, nonentities, were what came into immediate contact with men's consciences, but behind these a real power lay concealed, and one of terrible energy. —The demoniacal background continues through all ages, even to the end of the world. But in regard to "the works of men's hands," &c., changes take place in the course of time, yet not such as materially to affect the nature of things. The world is continually fabricating to itself new schemes, which it idolizes and worships. The Seer here makes account only of that form which was prevalent in his time, without meaning, however, to ascribe more to this than the rest.—It is not without reason that the works of the hands are set first. For, the subject is not about a direct and conscious worshipping of demons.—On the words, "that neither see," &c., comp. Dan. v. 23, "But the God, in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

Ver. 21. *And they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.* On the transgressions of the first table there follow now those of the second. The former were completed in the number ten, and these latter are comprised in four. The four, on account of the four quarters of heaven, is next to the ten, the signature of the comprehensive, the complete. The two first sins are against the fifth command, according to Luther's reckoning, the sixth by the original text, or the first of the second table; the two last are against the sixth and seventh, or the seventh and eighth respectively. *Sorcery* (mentioned also ch. xviii. 23, and Gal. v. 20) appears here among the transgressions of the second table, in connection with open murders, and is therefore viewed not in its religious aspect, but as one of the means by which a neighbour might be secretly injured, and injured in respect to his life. Fornication is the spirit of licentiousness, whence proceeds the transgression of the precept: Thou shalt not commit adultery.

THE INTERLUDE IN CH. X. 1—XI. 13.

The seven angels with the seven trumpets form a prophetic picture in itself complete, bringing matters fully to an end, as was the case also with the preceding group of the six seals; and after it an entirely new beginning follows, the vision of the three enemies of the kingdom of God. In this section ch. x. 1—xi. 13 forms a sort of episode; and ch. xi. 14 connects itself with ix. 21.

The prophet sees a strong angel descending from heaven, ver. 1. First by a symbolical action—namely, having his right foot planted on the sea, the left on the earth—and then by an express word, coupled with an oath, this angel announces, that under the trumpet of the seventh angel the full and perfect realization of all the promises made to the church concerning her final victory over the world and the kingdom of glory should be accomplished, ver. 2—7. Then he gives to the prophet a little book of painful contents, which should enable him and the church to bear that first business with a courageous spirit.[1] He swallows the little book, and is thereby put in a capacity for uttering the prophecy which follows in ch. xi. 1—13, and by which the contents of the little book are made known. The church—alas! that it should be so—has become subject to the power of the world, not only externally, but partly also internally, connected with it and leagued together for the persecution of the true confessors of the faith. The kernel, however, remains unhurt, and the elect abide stedfast under the trial. Those only who stand in a loose relation to the church shall fall under it. Whoever in the church has, to him it shall then be given, and only from him who has not shall be taken away what he has. Through the whole course of the external and internal pressure of the world on the church, the work of witnessing proceeds by the operation of the grace of God.

[1] The correct view of this connection between the first business of the angel and the second is found in Vitringa: "This vision is of a consolatory kind, as in it the Holy Spirit sought to fit and prepare John, and in him the church, for the new revelation, contained in the little book, concerning some new and very severe calamity that was to befal the church, and of which much is said in the subsequent part of this prophecy; so that what was to come might be borne with a patient and composed mind, and with the experience of much consolation."

And the reformation of the church, prepared by this, has been ever and anon brought about by means of God's visitations of judgment. By these it is effected, that the blessed seed scattered by the faithful germinates, and grows and brings forth fruit.

The interlude here between the sixth and seventh trumpets has its correspondence in the vision of the seven seals, which is united with this into a pair, and in common with it is of a preparatory and introductory character, in the episode between the sixth and seventh seals, vii. There, too, the look is turned from the world, with the fates of which, according to the historical starting-point of the book, its chief scenes have alone to do, to the church; as is the case also here. How does it go with the church of God during the frightful judgments which come upon the world? This question is answered in the whole of the seventh chapter. But, while there the discourse is of the state of the church under the plagues which desolate the world, the question that is answered here, having immediate reference to the two last verses of ch. ix., is: How does the church stand related to the corruption of the world that lies in wickedness, and which proves itself to be irremediable even under the severest judgments of God? To this question the answer is of a less joyful kind than to the first. There the bright side of the church's future is presented to our view; but here it is the dark side; though still even in the night the stars appear shining. It goes otherwise in the church of the Lord, in consequence of the strong pressure of the world on it, than could well have been imagined by those who have not known from their own experience the weakness of the flesh as to its dread of suffering, and the deceitfulness of the heart; who have not obtained any deep insight into the mystery of sin. For, even in the church much apostacy and corruption discover themselves, and there too is the agency of God to be displayed in executing judgment. But the pain this was fitted to occasion is softened, a balsam is prepared for the wound at the very first by the appearance of the rainbow around the strong angel's head in ch. x. 1; and not only so, but against the apostacy a reaction takes place in the midst of the church, which is strengthened by God, and brought to glory, though not without sad reverses; so that the judgment is not a

consuming one, but only prepares the way for the operations of grace. When this manifests itself, then the distinction between the world and the church properly appears. The powers that lay bound in the latter are by the judgment of God set free. Of the world it is said in ch. ix. 20, 21, the two verses that form the transition to this interlude, "And the rest of the men that were not killed by these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons," etc. Here, on the other hand, it is said with manifest reference to that starting-point of the whole, "And the rest were frightened, and gave glory to the God of heaven." Thus we obtain a firm foundation for the consolatory announcement of the strong angel, that the completion of the mystery of God infallibly approaches, and which was fitly made to precede the representation of the facts, that were so much fitted to beget despair in respect to that completion. For how could a church that had become so much identified with the world, obtain a final victory over the world! It is announced in reply, first, that the worldly admixture is not a total one, reaching to the innermost source of life, and then, that the judgment of God shall purge it out.

Ch. x. 1. *And I saw another strong angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and the rainbow upon his head; and his face like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.* The *other angel* (understood most easily in relation to the angels who blew the trumpets), can only be Christ. For everything that is said to characterize this other angel applies only to God, who can be no angel, and to the reflection of his glory, Christ. We cannot suppose with Züllig, that Jehovah had communicated to the angel his proper insignia, for these are not communicable. It would, indeed, have been contrary to the divine word, "I will not give my glory to another"—a breaking down of the limits between the Creator and his creature, for which no analogy is to be found in the whole of Scripture. It must, at any rate, have been very carefully and expressly pointed out, that the glory was altogether of a borrowed kind. But there is no trace whatever of this. Further, the operations of the angel belong only to Christ. The planting of the right foot on the sea, and of the left on the earth, as certainly belongs to Christ, as it is to him and not to an angel that God has put in subjection the future world (Hebr. ii. 5), as

certainly as the dominion of the world must be possessed by the Lord and his Christ (ch. xi. 15.) It would have been presumption for a created angel to come forth thus. Nothing but the oath of God, or of one connected with him by oneness of nature, can secure for the church, what requires here to be secured for her. Scripture never attributes to angels such depth of insight into the divine decrees, that their authority could be a perfectly secure one for the church—comp. 1 Pet. i. 12, and Rev. v. 3. It would have been somewhat different if the angel had made the oath merely in the name of God, or had related it as having been made by God; as in Gen. xxii. 16. And even there it is not an angel that speaks, but the angel of the Lord: "By myself have I sworn, *saith the Lord.*" Here, too, the suitableness of the result is founded on the person swearing; the angel swears in his name; and of such an oath, made by a created angel, Scripture furnishes no example.[1] Then, in the original passage, Dan. xii. 7, it is not a created angel, but Michael, the Logos, who stands upon the waters of Tigris, as the angel here upon the sea and earth, and swears. Finally, the reference to Christ has on its side the analogy of ch. vii. 2, where he appears likewise under the name of *another* angel. *There* he comes forth for the consolation of his church, which was troubled at the prospect of the judgments which were to pass over the world; *here* he meets the disquieting doubts regarding the completion of the kingdom of God and its final victory over the world, which were awakened by the thought of the worldly spirit having gained so much in the church itself. There he consoles the church, when ready to faint on account of her participation in the world's plagues, and here, in like manner, when ready to faint on account of her participation in the world's sins. What seems to be against this angel being Christ, has already nearly all been met at ch. vii. 2, comp. also ch. xviii. 1, where Christ is designated in a similar

1 Vitringa: "Does the hope of the church rest on the oath of a created angel? Is it the part of a created angel to swear, that the words of prophecy and the promises given to the church shall be fulfilled? Assuredly, if the hope of the church shall stand unmoved, it cannot be sustained excepting by the faithfulness and oath of that very person, to whose nature failure is not incident, and which of itself is able to perform whatever it swears to—and this can be said only of God. Wherefore God swears by himself (Heb. vi. 7), when his object was to confirm the faith of his people regarding what he had promised in the Old Testament, and shew the unchangeableness of his council."

manner. The conclusion: "The angel swears here by the Creator, therefore he is himself a creature," is a very hasty one. The mere circumstance of Christ appearing here as an angel precluded his swearing by himself, and required that he should swear by him who had sent him and who was represented by him. Were such reasoning sound, from how much of what Christ spake in his state of humiliation (with which his appearance here is on a line) might conclusions be drawn against his true Godhead! But why should Christ not have been expressly named? why is he so vaguely designated? Because the Seer will only relate what he saw, and deliver to his reader the sacred riddle, which had been presented to himself, and which he had himself solved. He acted quite similarly at the appearance of Christ in ch. i.—Christ did not need to come down from heaven, on account of what he had to say to John, for John was in heaven. But the reason for the coming down is given in ver. 2. He comes down to plant his foot upon the sea and the earth, and by this act to indicate his approaching possession of both. This was the proper position for the uttering of the oath. For the oath delivers a commentary on that symbolical action, and discloses its meaning. There is no necessity for supposing that John looked down from heaven upon earth. The most natural view is, that from out of the earth he saw the strong angel coming down. John's being in heaven is to be understood positively and not exclusively. According to John iii. 3, Christ also was at once in heaven and on the earth. Where the earth presents anything to be seen, there John was on the earth, as in ch. xii. 18, he stands on the sand of the sea, and in ch. xvii 3, he finds himself in the wilderness. But where, again, anything was to be seen in heaven, he is in heaven. Such a double-sided existence, in a certain degree, belongs to all believers; their citizenship is in heaven, Phil. iii. 20, and still they behold the doings of God upon the earth, Ps. xlvi. 9. The mind is in a sickly state when the eye is shut in regard to the operations of God upon the earth. The being in heaven, with John, existed only potentially.—On the cloud, as a foreshadowing of judgment, see on ch. i. 7. Remarks like this, "By the cloud the brightness of the angel was not only indicated, but also in a fitting manner veiled," or this, "covered with a cloud on account of the extreme splendour,

which blinds the eyes," are alien to the scriptural mode of representation, in which the symbol of the cloud has but one well-established meaning. The object of the judgment foreshadowed by the cloud is primarily the world. To it more immediately belongs the threatening symbolically announced in the cloud. On it first of all does this cloud, big with furious storms, discharge what it contains. For the completion of the judgment on the world is in vers. 2—7 set before the view of the church, whose completion is inseparably bound up with that. Still, we must not stand simply at this. The appearance is prefigurative of the whole contents of the interlude, as Bengel remarks: "In such appearances we must keep the attire of the person who appears, and the word spoken by him in connection with each other. Thus the attire of Christ in ch. i., and what he presently afterwards caused John to write to the churches, throw light mutually on each other." All that occurs in the interlude of judicial agency must stand in connection with the cloud. But in ch. xi. 13 we read of a great judgment, which alights on the degenerate church. We must therefore contemplate the cloud, charged with lightning, thunder, and hail, with mingled feelings. It is at once a call to joy, and an occasion for awakening fear and trembling, exciting the cry, Woe is me, and Lord have mercy on us.—But the wound which the cloud makes is healed by the rainbow (Luther, following a false reading: *a* rainbow; there is only *one* spiritual rainbow, as there is only one whose head the rainbow can adorn)—the symbol of divine grace returning after wrath—of the church to which alone belong the declarations, "I kill and I make alive," and "he wounds and he binds up, he smites and his hands heal." Such things belong exclusively to the church, while the cloud is common to it with the world. Even when there is much sin with us, there is much more grace with God, which brings forth the lovely symbol of the rainbow to cheer the church when terrified by the frightful cloud, and ready to faint under a sense of sin. The rainbow on the head of the angel at the outset pledges to the church the completion of God's mystery, as is expressly promised in ver. 7; pledges to her what is promised in ch. xi. 1—13, the stedfastness of the faithful, in the time of temptation, the salutary, and not, as in the world, destructive operation of the divine judgments.—The *face like the sun* marks the angel as the

possessor of the glory of the Lord—comp. on ch. i. 16; Hebr. i. 3; 2 Cor. iv. 6. The face like the sun calls aloud to the church: "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions, because my name is in him. But if thou wilt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then will I be an enemy to thine enemies, and an adversary to thine adversaries," (Ex. xxiii. 21, 22.) The preservation of the divine glory, as it was imaged by the face like the sun, is the completion of God's judgment on the world, and also the judgment on the church, and the manifestation of grace toward her. For in the forgiveness of sins the glory and holiness of God, his absolute being, shine forth in the clearest and purest manner, according to Hosea xi. 9, "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim (as formerly Sodom), for I am God and not a man, I am the Holy in thy midst, and do not go into the city"—am no son of man, like those who walk upon the earth, and go out and in at the gates of the city. The moderation of the judicial punishments inflicted on those who are called after God's name appears there as a manifestation of the holiness of God. He whose face beams like the sun, the Holy, is free from all human passions, which always keep the eye stiffly directed to only one side.—Two things are said of the feet, their *pillar-like* and their *fiery* appearance. As the latter characteristic is manifestly of a polemical nature—comp. what was said on the corresponding phrase, "like clear brass," in ch. i. 15, ii. 18—so the other also, the pillar-like appearance, must be understood in a polemical sense. It may be that as the fire images the consuming character of God's punitive righteousness, so the designation as pillars brings out the *massive* character, which renders it so crushing to all upon whom it is exercised. But the view of Bengel appears preferable, "to hold to his post in an invincible manner where he plants his feet," "the immoveable stedfastness of the heavenly conqueror against all the resistance of his enemies." The post-like standing suits quite well in ver. 2, and at ch. iii. 12, where also unchangeable stedfastness is indicated by the pillars.—The dark cloud, threatening fire, forms the beginning, fire itself the close. In the pillar of cloud and fire also we have the two combined together, Ex. xiii. 21. The two there also have a threatening character, and symbolize the

Lord's judgments upon his enemies. The symbol of the Lord's presence exhibited a bright character for Israel only while they continued faithful.

Ver. 2. *And he had in his hand a little book open; and he set his right foot on the sea, and the left upon the earth.* That the angel has here the open book in his hand, shews plainly that we are not to separate the interlude into two parts independent of each other, ch. x. 1—7, and ch. x. 8—11, 13. If the little book were without meaning as to the first action, the angel could not have appeared with it so early in his hand—as Züllig conceives: "The little book belongs to the description of his appearance, although it has nothing to do with what immediately follows." The impression made would then be a very disturbing one. But the correct view is rather this: ver. 2—7 meet the doubt and disquietude, which the partly distressing contents of the little book were fitted to raise. In this it is represented how the worldly spirit was to press hard upon the church, and to some extent also press into her. Should such a church, so deeply tainted by the world, be held worthy of attaining to a complete victory over the world? Must not the accomplishment of God's mystery, which he had announced to his servants the prophets, be staid in the middle of its course? Could there be anything more than half faith kept in regard to the whole salvation? The consideration of the sinfulness of the chosen of the entire church—this is the dangerous rock on which the hope of a completed work of salvation threatens to be shipwrecked. Without the supposition of such a separate occasion and reference, vers. 2—7 is scarcely intelligible. Apart from this, what need were there for the solemn asseveration by an oath, that after the preliminary judgments the final ones should follow, and the "regeneration" therewith connected? That, apart from the *one* mighty stumblingblock, is the most natural in the world for the believing mind.—The little book here manifestly looks back to the book in ch. v. 1. But the remark of Bengel is quite erroneous, that "this little book forms the remnant or the filling up of that book; in that this also was contained and sealed along with it." The contents of the *book* have already been fully communicated. The book contains the judgments on the world, the little book the destinies of the

church. With the distinction of the book[1] from the little book—founded on the circumstance that the sins and punishments of the world constitute matter of a much more comprehensive nature than those of the church—the circumstance goes hand in hand of the *book* being written on both sides; for this indicated the fulness of its matter.—The book was sealed with seven seals, and no one could open it but Christ, who did open it, after John had wept much that no one could open it and look into it. The subject in hand there was the victory of the church over the world. But here, on the other hand, the *little* book is opened. The subject of which it treats is the injuries sustained by the church from the pernicious influence exercised over it by the world. They lie also upon the surface, and irresistibly force themselves upon one's notice. Here the word holds: "Lord, my sins are ever before me."—The *planting of the foot* on anything is a symbol of taking possession and maintaining with invincible power. In Dan. xii. 6, Michael appears as standing on the waters of the Tigris, as a sign that he has power over the might of heathendom, and consequently could bring it under his dominion. Comp., besides, Ps. viii. 7, where to put under the feet and to have dominion are parallel; Ps. cx. 1, Jos. x. 24. A commentary on the symbolical action is given here, as in Daniel, by the oath, which proceeds upon an unconditional subjection of the earth and the sea.—That the sea here, as commonly in the Revelation, is used of the sea of the nations (see on ch. viii. 8), is clear from this alone, that the literal sea has nothing properly to do with the matter in hand: it was not comprehended in the revolt against God and his kingdom, and the placing it under subjection, as announced by the symbolical action, would have been without meaning. The feet which were placed on the sea and the earth are, according to ver. 1, like pillars of fire; they fix themselves fast like posts wherever they are placed, and consume those who oppose themselves. Where these feet are placed, there revolt against God must have existed. To this result we are led by the consideration that the sea here, and likewise in vers. 5 and 8, is named before the earth, and also by the right foot being placed on it.

1 The βιβλίον is in form a diminutive, but in use is scarcely distinguished from βίβλος.

And in the next group it is not out of the literal sea, but out of the sea of the nations, that the beast arises.

Ver. 3. *And he cried with a loud voice, as a lion roars; and when he cried the seven thunders uttered their voices.* The *hostile* character of the loud voice is made manifest by comparing it with the roar of the lion. This, in a series of passages of the Old Testament, has already been consecrated as an expression of the wrath of God against his enemies—comp. Hos. xi. 10, where the Lord roars like a lion for his church against the world; Joel iii. 16, "The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake; and the Lord shall be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel;" also the passages resting on that of Joel, Am. i. 2, Jer. xxv. 30. Christ had already been designated the lion of the tribe of Judah, on account of his terribleness to his enemies. Whom the threatening respects is manifest from ver. 2, where the strong angel plants his foot upon the sea and the earth. To them there is called out a frightful, "Thus far and no farther;" to them is announced the complete discomfiture, which brings for ever to an end their opposition to heaven. We afterwards see the first beast rising out of the sea—the ungodly world-power, and out of the earth the second beast—the ungodly spirit of earthly wisdom; by which the conflict between God and the world, that had hitherto been indicated only in general features, is to be more pointedly delineated. The strong voice like the roaring of a lion itself intimates that the matter is not to be very greatly protracted. Jesus formerly exclaimed with a loud voice when on the cross, "It is finished." And the loud voice here announces that this last word of his upon earth shall be kept in the final victory of the church, and the subjection of the world, which have their foundation in the work accomplished by Christ upon the cross.[1]—What was uttered by the angel in a brief and sharp word of threatening is continued and carried forward by the seven thunders. This connection with the lion's roar alone shews that the

[1] Through the μυκᾶσθαι, properly mugire, the roar of the lion is here fitly designated, because a stronger and more palpable expression than the ὠρύεσθαι of 1 Pet. v. 8. It is too far-fetched to think of the resemblance which the voice of the lion is said to have to that of cattle, when he has got his prey; Plutarch remarks concerning it, de animal.: κᾶν λάβωσιν, ὁτιοῦν, ἀνακαλοῦνται (calling on their young) μόσχου μυκήματι τὸ βρύχημα ποιοῦντες ὅμοιον.

seven trumpets must possess a threatening character. Thunders in the Apocalypse, too, always carry a polemical aspect, always stand in respect to the frightful judgments of God, whether they may only be threatened, or may be actually executed—comp. on ch. iv. 5, viii. 5, xi. 19, xvi. 18. Finally, there can be no doubt that the seven trumpets here point to Ps. xxix. There the voice of the Lord is mentioned seven times, which cannot be regarded as accidental, on account of the corresponding seven number of the verses. But in Ps. xxix. the thunder bears a frightful character ("the voice of the Lord cleaves with flames of fire," ver. 7); it appears as a symbolical threatening to the world, and hence also as a symbolical promise to the church, which is borne down by the world. From these remarks it will be seen with what justice it is still maintained, that "because thunder speaks, the subject cannot necessarily be a matter of terror." The *not* is here plainly too much. Nor are we to give force to the article, so as to suppose there should be actually seven peals of thunder; these are no more to be understood really, than the seven Spirits of God in ch. i. 4. This belongs only to the vision, and has its root in Ps. xxix.—It is remarkable that in the writings of the New Testament there is next to no mention of thunder, excepting in those of John. It occurs in the gospel, ch. xii. 29, where a commentary is given in ver. 31; so that there also the thunder has a polemical character; it announces that the name of Jesus shall be glorified by the execution of judgment on this world. Then it occurs in a long series of passages in the Apocalypse. Once only is it found in Mark, ch. iii. 17, and with reference to John, to whom, along with his brother James, we are told, the Lord gave the name of Boanerges, sons of thunder. This passage supplies us with a key for the frequent occurrence of thunder in the Revelation, as was remarked by Bengel, "A son of thunder is a fit person for hearing voices of thunder." The name Boanerges is held by Rationalism to be a name of reproach, but it is not less a name of honour, and significative of a divine mission, than the name Peter, with which it is very closely connected. In the application of that name the Lord described the Apocalypse long before it was written, so that it may be said to be deprived of its signification, whenever the Apocalypse is ascribed to another than John. It

rests upon a twofold supposition; first, a vivid sense of the judicial righteousness of God in respect to those against whom it is directed (to the strength of which in James, his *roughness*, as the world would say, he probably owed his early martyrdom), and an aptness for the symbolical language of nature. Another point of connexion as to the past for the frequent occurrence of thunder in the Apocalypse, is furnished by Luke ix. 51. John and James would have had fire immediately called down from heaven on those who would not receive Jesus; in which we have not merely to think of their strong sense of the divine righteousness, which then certainly was mingled with dross, and required to be purified by the fire of the Holy Spirit, but also of the peculiar cast of mind, which should have led them to seek for the exercise of the divine righteousness in this particular form.

Ver. 4. *And when the seven thunders had uttered (their voices), I was going to write (them); and I heard a voice from heaven saying: Seal what the seven thunders have uttered, and write it not.* A speech of definite meaning is attributed to the thunders, to each its separate import. For, otherwise, it would have been impossible to write what they had spoken. There is here a remarkable coincidence with John xii. 28, where also we have a voice of thunder with a definite meaning. We must not compare here the unutterable words of Paul in 2 Cor. xii. 4. For that the discourse here is not of impenetrable secrets, as it is there, is plain from the circumstance that John was going to write the words. The means of a more exact explanation in regard to this demand are furnished by the fundamental passages of the Old Testament, Dan. viii. 26, "Shut up the vision, for it is for a long time"—where the words that follow, "I was astonished at the vision, and no one understood it," plainly show what is meant by the shutting up; Dan. xii. 4, where Daniel is enjoined to fold up the roll, which contained the prophecy that had been imparted to him, and to seal it till the time of the fulfilment—meaning, that the prophecy was for the present as good as closed up and sealed, the church of the future should alone be able to make a right use of it; Dan. xii. 9, where the angel answered to the prayer of Daniel, for more explicit information regarding the prophecy, that he could not impart this, for the prophecy was to be shut up and sealed till the last time. From these

fundamental passages, it follows, 1. That here it is only a temporary keeping secret that is spoken of. From the first indeed we could expect no other than such; for we have here the *Revelation* of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, we are not to think of an absolute and perpetual secrecy. Substantially, the sequel must disclose what is here shut up. The book with seven seals also in ch. v. was only provisionally sealed. In common life it is not what is never to be read, but only what is not to be read in the meantime, that is sealed. 2. That the ground of this preliminary keeping secret is to be sought in this, that the basis for the understanding of it meanwhile was wanting. With this also agrees ch. xxii. 10. The injunction *not* to seal is there founded on the consideration, that the fulfilment should soon throw light on the prophecy. The general truth, that the seven thunders announced the destruction of the ungodly power, was plain enough. But for the particular points involved, there was still wanting the necessary foundation to a proper understanding, and it would have been needful to trespass on the territory of the following groups. In these we are to expect, according to this passage, detailed explanations regarding the overthrow of the powers that are opposed to the kingdom of God. The next group itself treats of the three enemies of God's kingdom; the sixth relates the destruction of these three enemies; in ch. xx. 7, ss., the assault and overthrow of Gog and Magog are depicted. What is thus delineated in later portions of the overthrow of the enemies of God's kingdom, and of the final victory of the latter, must be essentially identical with that, which is here meanwhile shut up in secrecy.—In regard to the voice of the angel Bengel remarks, "From the commencement of the book the Lord Jesus himself has so often told John to write, that it is doubtless his voice also, which in other passages commands John to write, and here interdicts his writing, while it commands him to take the little book." If we can suppose, that it was Christ who appeared in the character of the strong angel, we can appropriately understand by the voice from heaven, the voice of Christ. For, his appearing as the strong angel does not interfere with his sitting on the right hand of the Father. In the days of his flesh, also, he was not merely on the earth, but constantly in heaven too—comp. John iii. 13. But that the voice does not proceed from

the angel but from heaven arises from this, that the angel has here a special mission, within the compass of which there lay no control over the composition of the Apocalypse.

Ver. 5. *And the angel whom I saw stand upon the sea and the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven.* Ver. 6. *And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who has made heaven and what is therein, and the earth and what is therein, and the sea and what is therein, that henceforth no time more should be.* Ver. 7. *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as he has declared to his servants the prophets.* The statement: whom I saw stand, is not merely a personal description. The oath forms a commentary on the placing of the foot on the sea and the earth. The original passage is Dan. xii. 7, "And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever, that in a time, two times, and an half time . . . all these things shall be finished." There the angel raises both hands to heaven, here only the right hand; for in the one hand (known to be the left from what is here said of the right) he holds the book. The passage of Daniel, again, points back to Deut. xxxii. 40, 41, where Jehovah swears that he will avenge his oppressed church on her persecutors: "For I lift my hand to heaven, and say, As truly as I live for ever I whet my glittering sword, and my hand lays hold on judgment," etc. The strong angel swears by him who lives for ever, and ever, who has made heaven, etc. He who lives for ever will reign for ever, ch. xi. 15. He must act over again the past, as it perpetually springs up afresh. Eternal, like himself, must his protection also be over his people. He can never surrender them to destruction, but must conduct them to the consummation of glory—comp. Ps. cii. 24, and Deut. xxxii. 40, where Jehovah gives his eternity as a pledge that he will execute vengeance for his people. He who has made heaven and the other regions of created beings cannot be satisfied with a *partial* dominion; the end must belong to him equally with the beginning (see on ch. i. 8), the kingdom of the world must be unconditionally his; there can be nothing in the heaven, on the earth, and in the sea, whether literal or that of the nations, which for a

continuance can raise against him a successful opposition; all in heaven, sea, and earth, must at last give way and vanish, that is contrary to their original destination (ch. xxi. 1.) See on ch. iv. 11 in regard to the creation as a pledge of the completion of the kingdom of God. The object of the oath is that no time more shall be. Time, here, is as much as, delay—comp. ii. 21, vi. 11, where time occurs in a similar sense, Isa. xiii. 22, Hab. ii. 3. The more exact import is given in ver. 7. From that we learn that a delay is here meant, which might intervene between the seventh trumpet and the completion of the mystery of God. In the earlier trumpets a delay had entered in regard to the coming of the kingdom of God in its completion. The church, ready to faint under a sense of sin, is afraid that matters shall go under the seventh trumpet as they have done before, that they shall continue to stand at the suspension of a particular judgment. The doubt has respect, not to the entering of the seventh trumpet, but to the nature and extent of it. The church dreads lest her sins may deprive her of the good to be brought by it. Because she has not answered her destination and calling, she thinks that she can look for no full salvation, no perfect victory. The completion has receded from her to an invisible distance. This is the temptation that the oath meets. The supposition of some expositors, that an absolute ceasing of time is what is here spoken of, introduces a modern thought into the passage; for, according to the scriptural point of view, eternity is not the antithesis to time, but measureless time, and is dispersed by ver. 7, where the discourse is not, as by this supposition we should have expected, of the entrance of eternity. I pass over in silence the still more arbitrary exposition of Bengel. *The mystery of God*, which shall be finished in the days of the seventh trumpet, must be entirely of a joyful nature. For it is said literally, "as he has evangelised his servants the prophets," as he has given to them concerning it a *joyful* message. By the connection, the mystery has respect to the dominion of Christ over the sea and the earth. For, the symbolical action that expresses this, forms the starting-point of the oath. But we recognize more exactly the contents of the mystery of God from ch. xi. 15, 18, where the things concealed here from the church actually appear. We learn there, that it affects the Lord's dominion over the world, the judgment of the

world, and the full establishment of the servants of God in their inheritance. It was by pointing to this glorious end, that the prophets of the Old Testament consoled believers during the long and dismal ages of the world's ascendancy and power. The reality of this consolation must be made good at the trumpet of the seventh angel. "God's children sow, indeed, sorrowfully and in tears, but at last, and notwithstanding their sins, the period comes for which they longed. The harvest time comes when they gather their sheaves. Then shall all their bitter sorrow be turned into joy and laughter." The joyful message of the completion is marked as a mystery. The idea of mystery is that of absolute inaccessibility to ordinary sense and discernment—comp. on ch. i. 1. This is fast bound within the circle of the present. Because it knows not the power of God, Matth. xxii. 29, it cannot realize the thought of such a radical change of state, as would be implied in the coming of a new heavens and a new earth, and the sea being no more found. It thinks that the church is constantly to lie on the ground, the world always to triumph. Because it knows not the invincible grace of God, it casts a glance on the sins of the church, and feels as if these were sufficient to throw an insuperable obstacle in the way of the completion of God's kingdom. The expression: then is finished,[1] stands with realizing confidence for: then shall be finished—comp. the "it is done," in ch. xi. 15, and in ver. 17, "Thou hast taken."

Ver. 8. *And the voice, which I heard from heaven, spake again with me and said, Go away, take the open little book in the hand of the angel, who stands upon the sea and the earth.* After John, and with him the church, has been furnished with heavenly consolation, the little book with its painful contents was presented to him. Here also there is not a mere personal description, when the book is spoken of as being in the hand of the angel, who stands on the sea and the earth. The pain, which the little book naturally occasioned, was healed by a glance at Him in whose hand it was. Notwithstanding the little book, the church's victory over the sea and the earth remains certain. The contents of the little book are already by anticipation deter-

1 Literally: And it is finished, in the Hebr. style; comp. the *καί* in the Apod. Jas. iv. 15. The various readings have arisen from people failing to enter into the tempus propheticum.

mined by the analogy of the book in the passage of Ezekiel here referred to, ch. ii. 8, ss. From this we expect, 1. That the little book should be of a mournful character; 2. That it should have respect, not to the fates of the world, but to those of the church; for that little book has to do with the sins of a degenerate church, and with the judgments which the Lord was going to inflict on account of them. The subject of it is still farther determined by ver. 9, 10, according to which it is a painful one to the Seer. And the result thus obtained is confirmed by the representation given of the contents of the book in ch. xi. 1—13. It treats of the falling away of the church, and the divine visitations sent in chastisement for this. As the rainbow provides consolation in respect to the cloud, so the angel's standing upon the sea and the earth, provides consolation in respect to the little book, which must produce despair, unless it were found in such a hand.

Ver. 9. *And I went away to the angel and spake to him, that he should give me the little book. And he said to me, Take and eat it, and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey.* The Seer must not merely eat the little book; he must swallow it, so that it might go down into his body. Ch. iii. 3 of Ezekiel corresponds "Thou shalt make thy body (not merely thy mouth) eat this book, and fill thy bowels with it." The substantial import of the swallowing is given by Ezekiel, ch. iii. 10, in the words, "All my words, which I speak to thee, do thou take into thy heart." The man of God must take the divine truth into his inmost being, and convert it into juice and blood (comp. Ps xl. 9, "Thy law is in my heart," properly in mine entrails.) Thus alone does he become qualified to appear as God's spokesman, to *prophecy*—comp. Ez. iii. 1, where the speaking and prophecying appear as the end and consequence of the eating, "Thou son of man, eat what thou findest (not, what thou likest), eat this roll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." Immediately after he has swallowed the roll, which is the heavenly exemplar of the existing book of his prophecies, precisely as the little book of John comes again into view in ch. xi. 1—13, it is said in ver. 4, "And he said to me, Thou son of man, go to the house of Israel, and speak to them my words." That the sweetness in the mouth does not proceed from the partly agreeable contents, is clear from the passage in Ezekiel. The book, which

he found to be like honey in his mouth for sweetness, contained nothing but what was grievous, it was written throughout with lamentation, mourning, and woe. That the sweetness, too, is ascribed to the mouth, and the bitterness to the belly, shews, that we are not to think of contents partly sweet, and partly bitter. The real cause of the sweetness we learn from the passage, on which, again, that of Ezekiel rests, Jer. xv. 16, "I found thy words and ate them (received them into my inmost being), and thy words were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for thy name is named upon me, Jehovah, God of Hosts." It is unspeakably sweet and delectable to be the organ and the spokesman of the Most High. Then also the matter of the words themselves comes into consideration,—comp. Ps. xix. 11, where the commands of the Lord are described as sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. Even the most pungent divine truths have for a spiritually minded man a joyful and refreshing side.[1] The bitterness, which the spiritual food occasioned in the body of the Seer (literally, "it shall make thee bitter in the body"), denotes the sharp pain, produced by the special contents of the word, that was committed to him. It is not so direct as the sweetness of the mouth derived from the original passage in Ezekiel. But Jer. xv. 17 substantially corresponds. The prophet there, speaking of the mournful part of his work, says, "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers nor rejoiced, I sat alone because of thy hand (Michaelis: 'brooding over the misfortunes of my people, which I must predict according to thy command'), for with indignation thou fillest me." We must connect with this the passage in Ezek. ch. ii. 10, which declares the book-roll to have been filled with lamentation, mourning, and woe. In Ezek. iii. 14, "And I went embittered in the heat of my spirit," there is found, not merely the substance of the figurative representation before us, but also in the *embittered*, in the feeling of vexatious sadness and holy indignation, a personal application of it.—Sweetness is attributed to the mouth, because this is the organ of God's orator, the prophet as such,—comp.

1 Vitringa: "The prophets, carried out of themselves, pass entirely over, as it were, into the room of God, and, divesting themselves of carnal affection, rising into the region of pure and spiritual contemplation, whatever they saw they could do for the glory of God, and for manifesting his righteousness as well as his grace, they approved of in their own mind."

Isa. vi. 5, 7, lix. 21. But to the prophet, as such, the divine revelation was sweet. All was agreeable to him, that came from the clear and pure well-spring of God. In contrast to the mouth the body distinguishes the Seer as an individual, as a member of the church.—What is said here to the prophet : take it and eat it, is in substance applicable to all believers, and especially to the teachers of the church in relation to holy writ. Their place in the kingdom of God will be measured by their fidelity in complying with this prescription. We, too, must eat and even swallow it ; not some choice portion of it, but the whole—not that alone which is agreeable to us, like those who separate the gospel from the law, but that also, which may occasion us the deepest pain. The twofold effect is still also renewing itself—on the one hand, joy in the whole word of God and cordial approbation, and on the other deep pain, in so far as the individual himself and the church are thereby condemned, and in so far as the hand of God, which is stretched out for punishment, comes there into contact with them.—The view, which regards the book as containing " the secret of the new world," tears it away in a violent manner from the prophecy in ver. 11, which, according to the original passage in Ezekiel, can only be regarded as the product of the swallowed book, and throws the whole, indeed, into confusion. Nor can it give anything but a very constrained explanation of the bitterness. What refers to the judgments of God upon a sinful world, and the final completion of God's mystery, ver. 7, is sweet both for the mouth and for the body. For the Christian, for the man of God, it is through and through a joyful message, a gospel—according to ver. 7, comp. Luke xxi. 28.

Ver. 10. *And I took the little book from the hand of the angel and swallowed it ; and it was sweet in my mouth like honey ; and when I had eaten it, it griped me in the belly.* The order is a reverse one, first sweetness, then bitterness. The change is intentional. It indicates, that the two sharply contend for the priority. The pain was first named before the joy, because it was here so deep, that it was soon to overcome the joy. Then the joy was mentioned before the pain, because such must be the order connected with the ways of God and uprightness.

Ver. 11. *And he said to me, Thou must again prophecy upon peoples, and nations, and tongues, and many kings.* Bengel

says on the: thou must, "He, who has not received and eaten the little book, cannot prophecy, but he, who has received and eaten it, must do so. So Paul also must testify, Acts xxiii. 11." Under the prophecying the symbolical action also in ch. xi. 1, 2, is comprehended. For, the symbolical action, especially an action that takes place merely internally, like the one mentioned there, is only one of the manifold forms of prophecy, separated from the simple figure by a fluctuating boundary.—*Again*, as in the vision of the seven seals, and in the six first trumpets.[1] But in another point of view differently. There, as the peoples, etc., were visited by the Lord with severe judgments; here, as they overflowed the church, seduced her into apostacy, and drew down upon her the judgments of the Lord. That it can be prophecied only in this respect upon the peoples and nations, is manifest from what was formerly remarked on the contents of the little book, which here again comes to light, (for little book and prophecy stand related to each other here precisely as in ch. i. 1, 3, revelation and prophecy.) And it is further manifest from that, which the prophet in ch. xi. 1—13 announces in fulfilment of the command to prophecy upon the peoples and nations. There, in ver. 2, the outer court is given to the Gentiles, and they tread the holy city; the beast out of the abyss, the ungodly power, carries on the war with the two witnesses, overcomes and kill them, ver. 7; those of the peoples, and tribes, and tongues, and nations, see their corpses three days and a half, and suffer not their corpses to be buried, ver. 9; they that dwell upon the earth rejoice over them, ver. 10. The translation of Luther has, through an important oversight, "to the peoples," instead of "upon the peoples."[1] The four number of the peoples, &c., the signature of the earth, points to the oecumenical character of this assault upon the church —comp. the corresponding expression, "who dwell upon the earth," in ch. xi. 10—and forbids our confining the prophecy to any single event in history. By the mention of *many kings* we

[1] Falsely Bengel: "In respect to the old prophets, to whose prophecies this very angel had referred." The reference to the earlier prophecies of the prophet himself is demanded by the indefinite designation of the object, which can only be explained by supposing what is common to the earlier and the later prophecying to be here marked.

[2] The ἐπί is found quite similarly used in John xii. 16. Τότε ἐμνήσθησαν ὅτι ταῦτα ἦν ἐπ' αὐτῷ γεγραμμένα. The προφητεύειν with ἐπί of what the prophecy has for its object, corresponds to the Hebr. התנבא with על: comp. 1 Kings xxii. 8, 18.

are taken out of the relations of the Seer's own time, in which the Christian church had to do with only one king, the Roman emperor. It shews, that he stood upon a high watch-tower, from which he looked abroad upon the whole history of the church and the world. That the kings were heathenish in their minds is shewn, not only by ch. xi., but also by the connection with the heathen here—comp. on ch. vii. 9. Ewald's supposition, that the kings are the leaders of armies, is only a proof of embarrassment. The kings here return again afterwards in the ten kings, who were in the service of the beast, ch. xvii. 12; in the kings of the earth, who, after the overthrow of Rome, warred against Christ under the auspices of the beast, ch. xix. 19; and in the kings of the whole earth, whom the wicked spirits in ch. xvi. 14 actuated in the conflict against Christ.

To the command to prophecy corresponds the prophet as described in the section ch. xi. 1—13. This falls into two divisions. The first, ver. 1 and 2, gives the promise, that the faith of the elect shall not expire; the second, ver. 3—13, certifies the uninterrupted continuance of the office of witnessing.

Ch. xi. 1. *And there was given to me a reed like a stick, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.* Ver. 2. *But the court, which is without the temple, throw out and measure it not, for it is given to the heathen, and the holy city shall they tread down forty and two months.* In the words of our Lord, as recorded in Matth. xxiv. 9—13, we are presented with the naked thoughts of this passage, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another, and many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." The fundamental truth also is found in the parable of the sower, where the outer court here had its correspondence in him who "heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while, for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and bye he is offended." Now, this thought has here, agreeably to the nature of vision, which lends

form to what is spiritual, flesh and blood imparted to it. The church appears under the symbol of the temple, which for so many centuries was the seat and external representation of the kingdom of God, and hence occurs, otherwise than in vision, in a series of passages in the New Testament as the designation of the church, John ii. 19; Mark xiv. 58; Eph. ii. 21; 22; 1 Tim. iii. 15; 2 Cor. vi. 16; 2 Thess. ii. 4; Heb. iii. 6. The temple proper denotes those, who are deeply filled and penetrated by the spirit of the church, the outer court those, who are only superficially affected. The *rising* up forms the contrast to the sitting. But both the sitting and the rising belong only to the vision. In the reality, it is the transition from rest to activity, which is denoted by the rising. The import of the *measuring* is determined by the opposite *throwing out.* It is measured as far as the preservation is to go. Where the measuring ceases, there the line of abandoning begins. The figurative representation here rests upon Ezekiel, by whom in ch. xl. the restored temple was measured. The symbolical action here has respect to the preserving of the object represented. Beside the temple proper, which in the material building at Jerusalem consisted of the Most Holy Place, the residence of God, and the sanctuary, as the ideal abode of believers, the altar also is measured or preserved; and by this we can only understand the altar of burnt-offering—comp. on ch. vi. 9. It is here transferred to the temple itself, for the *therein* can only refer to the temple: measure the temple of God, and the altar (in it), and them that worship in it. This shows that we are here entirely on an ideal territory. In the temple of Jerusalem the altar of burnt-offering stood in the *real* place of resort to the people, in the outer court; but here it is transferred to their ideal dwelling-place, to the temple itself. The meaning of the altar we learn from ch. vi. 9—11: under the constraining power of love believers present themselves there as a free-will sacrifice to him who has redeemed them with his blood. Therefore, however hard the world may press, how great soever may be the desolations which it effects in the outworks, still the church remains in existence; the spirit of joyful sacrifice is preserved; true believers continually abide. The court in ver. 2, as contrasted with the temple proper, must not be limited to the *outer* court, but de-

notes whatever belonged to the sanctuary beside the temple proper: the *without* the temple forms a manifest contrast to the *within*. To designate by the court without those who have not in their souls been penetrated by the spirit of the church, was the more natural, since, according to the phraseology even of the Old Testament, true believers dwell in the house of God, and come into his sanctuary, while the multitude, who are but externally related to the church, only tread the courts—see Isa. i. 12. That the court should be thrown away, and given up to the heathen, stands related to the treading down of the city, as an effect to its cause. The overflowing of the church by the world brings it to pass, that from many, who have not, shall be taken away even that which they have. Nothing but the strong mound of a firm faith can resist their powerful billows.—The two and forty months contain only an apparent determination of time; as, indeed, all numbers in the Apocalypse have only an ideal signification; they belong not so properly to the chronological, as to the symbolical forum. The common signature of the dominion of the world over the church in the Revelation, resting on the prophecies of Daniel, (comp. at ch. xii. 6, xiii. 5), is the three and a half, in which we have only to think of the broken seven, the signature of the church. So that the meaning is here conveyed, that however the world may lift itself up, however it may proudly triumph, it can never attain to anything complete and lasting. These three and a half years return again in different forms: a time, two times, and an half time, ch. xii. 14, forty and two months, here and in ch. xiii. 5, 1260 days in ch. xii. 6. In the number of the beast also in ch. xiii. 18, the same thing substantially holds as in these numbers. We have here before us a representation, which does not bring into view some particular period of time in the world's history, but the whole course of it, only that towards the end every thing realizes itself in a more perfect manner. Wherever the world is found overflowing the church, from that of which John himself saw the commencement, to the last in ch. xx. 7—9, of which we have now the beginning before our eyes, there the substance of the prophecy always verifies itself anew, there the obligation still remains to those who are affected by the evil, to take it as the ground of consolation and warning to their hearts. At the same

time, it is interesting and rich in consolation and warning to trace in history the particular exemplifications of our prophecy. Let any one read, for example, what Eusebius has written at the beginning of his eight book on the Diocletian persecution. A great degeneracy in the Christian church preceded it, many were shaken by it, many more made entire shipwreck; yet true believers remained stedfast, and the church was built up, through the noble constancy of the martyrs.[1] The thought in this prophecy was in other respects quite correctly apprehended by the older expositors. Thus on the expression, "the holy city shall be trodden down," Bossuet remarks, "Christians shall be under the sway of the unbelievers; but though the weak shall fall, the church shall continue in strength. This is the first point which St John apprehends in the persecutions: the church continually abiding."

In the second part of the section, ver. 3—13, the church obtains the consolatory assurance, that even in the times of the most profound darkness and of the greatest worldly intermixture, the witnessing office and the possession of the gifts of the Spirit shall be perpetuated in her.

Ver. 3. *And I will give to my two witnesses, and they shall prophecy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.* Ver. 4. *These are the two olive-trees and the two lamps, which stand before the Lord of the earth.* For all who feel that they are in themselves impotent, and that nothing is done by their own strength, there is much consolation in the word, "I will give to my two witnesses." But, at the same time, it points to the heavy responsibility which they draw upon themselves, who will not let it be given, who by their softness and indolence close up the way to the grace for witnessing, so that they cannot attain to it. The declaration, I will give to my witnesses, cuts off all excuse. The object of the giving is simply to be supplied from the following words: And they shall prophecy—comp. on ch. ii. 20. The speaker is the strong angel, who gives to John

1 Vitringa: "Doubtless with grief and sorrow of mind did true Christians see great numbers among those who had professed faith in Christ suffering themselves, through fear of infamy and torture, to be prevailed upon to blaspheme the name of Christ and do homage to idols. God at that time measured the church by the plumb line of judgment, as it is in the vision of Amos, and publicly detected many hypocrites and others wavering in the faith."

the little book, Christ. The two witnesses are ideal persons, who appear in a multitude of real ones—personifications of the work of witnessing. The two number was primarily chosen on account of the pattern given in Moses (comp. with ver. 6, Ex. vii. 15—25 and ch. viii.—xi.; it was Moses who in ancient times changed the water into blood and smote the earth with many plagues), and Elias (who in the days of his prophecy shut up heaven, that it should not rain, and whose enemies were consumed by fire, comp. with ver. 5 and 6, 1 Kings xix. 17, xvii. 1.) It was precisely these two persons, also, who appeared on the mount of transfiguration, where John was present, as representatives of the witnessing that belonged to the Old Testament. As such they were types of that of the New Testament. The number two also is of consolatory import. It indicates that the true witness never stands isolated, that he always finds some with whom he can join hand to hand and heart to heart, in whose strength he can invigorate his weakness, and whose weakness he can again change through his own strength into power, and so derive fresh encouragement to himself. "In the midst of all tribulation," says a true witness, "it is an encouraging thing if one has at least one help, who stands side by side with him. Our Lord always sent forth his disciples by two together; and in earlier times there were Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb, Zerubabel and Joshua, Haggai and Zechariah, as on the opposite side Jannes and Jambres. One servant of Christ is able to support another, they mutually invigorate and strengthen each other; if they make a firm stand, they shall have both a common struggle, and a common victory and reward."—The two witnesses prophesy *clothed in sackcloth;* that is, they wore mourning garments of hair-cloth, after the example of Elias and John the Baptist, Matt. iii. 4. Mourning over the lamentable state of the holy city, pain at the desolation of the church, the earnest severity of repentance and of the call to repentance—these have in all times been, and still are, the marks of the Lord's true servants, and by the degree of this pain is recognised the degree of the spiritual demand made, and the amount of spiritual energy to be brought into action. They who have no eye and no heart for the backsliding of the church, will never be able to promote its revival and edification. Nature much dislikes being clothed

with sackcloth; they who follow it are not grieved at the affliction of Joseph, but play on the psaltery, and compose songs, and drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with balsam; it constantly strives to substitute in the room of the reality as it is a dream of its own; and while it often makes a very promising beginning, knows at least how to veil itself in a spiritual appearance, yet they who surrender themselves to it, shall one day be obliged to put on the garments of mourning, when the true witnesses put on their festive attire. —The two witnesses are designated in ver. 4 as the two *olive-trees* and the two *lamps*, which stand before the Lord of the whole earth, alluding to Zech. iv., according to which they bear the name of lamps and of olive-trees, as the concentration of the light, which belongs to the church of God, and an instrument of divine grace for her. What the two witnesses accomplish in behalf of the faithful, we learn partly from this, and partly from ver. 1. For, manifestly it is owing pre-eminently to their services, that the temple of God, with those who worship in it, are preserved in being. But what is said of these should serve not merely for our consolation, but also for our admonition. Especially for all the ministering servants of the church it should act like a burning fire in their bones. Woe to them, if they do not perform what is here ascribed to the two witnesses—if either no application, or a very poor one, can be made to them of the word, "These are the two olive trees and the two lights"—if they are not channels of grace to the church, and give forth to her no light. "Ye are the light of the world. A city which is set on a hill, cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father that is in heaven." "Teachers," says Bengel, "must not be cold and dry, but filled with oil; and the church, through all her members, must appropriate the oil, so as to exhibit in their walk a lovely brightness and an attractive beauty." The face of the witnesses turned upon the wicked, flashes on us in ver. 5 and 6.

Ver. 5. *And if any one will hurt them, fire goes out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if any one will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.* Ver. 6. *These have*

power to shut up heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy, and have power over water, to turn it into blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. The form in which the wrath and power of the witnesses here shews itself, as already remarked, is derived from the past. Bengel: "What Mosês and what Elias had done separately, that is said to be done by the two witnesses at once. It reaches to all visible nature, heaven or the firmament, the waters and the earth." It is the method of prophecy, to represent what is like in nature and in origin under like forms of manifestation, while still these are not specially meant, nor is anything more than the nature indicated. That is here, that the Lord gloriously arms his servants against their and his enemies. As the Lamb that was slain is at the same time the lion of the tribe of Judah, so also are those, whom he sends forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, at the same time lions, who have an invincible strength and power residing in them. Where the oil is, there also is fire. It is the strength of one and the same spirit, which manifests itself in the witnesses for the salvation of the good, and for vengeance on the wicked. The Lord has put his word in their mouth, which resembles a hammer, that breaks the rock in pieces; which is living and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, and pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Whoever, taking to his aid the powers of darkness, steels and hardens his heart against this *internally* judging power of the witnesses of God, he still cannot escape the *external* judgments, which they threaten and pronounce upon him in the name of the Lord and in their own name (for God's will is also theirs; what by the eternal laws of the divine nature is necessary is at the same time written on the tablets of their hearts.) He must feel, both in time and in eternity, that he has had to do with God's witness-bearers on earth. At the word of Elias fire came down from heaven and consumed his adversaries; and the mockery with which the infatuated people heard the word of Jeremiah (ch. v. 14, "Behold I make my word in thy mouth for fire and this people for wood, and thou devourest them") changed into bitter lamentations, when these words assumed flesh and blood in the Chaldeans, and besieged the city, and distressed it till they left

not one stone upon another. The word, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked," holds above all in respect to God as manifesting himself in his servants, and the testimony he puts into their mouth. "God," says Bengel, "is pure love; and his love has a holy order. He is good above all; therefore does he love himself above all with the holiest love, and then those creatures who stand in his love. Whatever, therefore, strikes against him (and his witnesses) in a hostile manner, shall be destroyed by him in vengeance as by a consuming fire." To know this, is most consolatory for those, whom the Lord has called to the office of bearing witness, especially in a time like the present, which so confidently imagines that in them it has to do only with feeble men. At the same time, it is well fitted to humble them in the dust, and to fill them with holy zeal for their divine calling. Who are they! and how does it become them to feel and act, in whose hands God has placed such power!—*He must in this manner be killed*, in the same manner as he has hurt them, and in righteous judgment because of it—comp. ch. xviii. 6.

Ver 7. *And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the abyss shall make war with them, and shall overcome them, and shall kill them.* The indifference is remarkable, with which the words, "and shall overcome them," are here uttered. But it is explained by what precedes and what follows. They shall only be overcome when they have finished their testimony, when God has no further need for their service, when their death can produce more fruit than their life. And on their overthrow and their death follows their glorification, and springs out of it. They die only to rise again and go to heaven. Their overthrow is but a concealed victory, like the corn of wheat, which dies in the earth in order to bring forth much fruit. If this were considered aright, how would it banish the fear, which makes so many in our day inclined to timid concessions, which smites the shepherds, and causes the sheep to be scattered! To escape imaginary dangers, these persons fall into real ones. For, only *one* danger is really to be feared, namely, that our heart be overcome, that faith, which is the innermost life of our souls, should be slain. What is said here of the witnesses of Christ, was exemplified in Christ himself. The world hated him, and yet the enemies could accomplish nothing against him, till

their hour came and the power of darkness. Then only did the darkness receive power, when he had finished his testimony, and when it was good for the church that he should go away; and his death was followed by his resurrection and ascension to heaven, as is represented here in ver. 11, 12, in respect to the true witnesses. "In all circumstances God still has his glory; and if it should appear that the evil gains the mastery over the good, the evil is still very limited; it cannot break forth sooner than its time, nor rise higher and last longer than God permits it. Begin but rightly with God, and the result shall not fail." The beast that ascends out of the abyss (comp. on ch. ix. 1), is mentioned here incidentally and by anticipation. The more extended description is given us by the Seer in the fourth group: the three enemies of God's kingdom, ch. xii.—xiv.; and in the sixth, the judgment on the three enemies, ch. xvii.—xx. That it should be brought into notice here plainly shews that we have not in the Revelation, as Bengel thought, a regularly progressive anticipatory history. The beast denotes the ungodly heathen state. By it here is meant the reviving of the ungodly heathen power at the close of the thousand years' reign, or, the whole of the ungodly power is here denoted by the most prominent part, which the Seer had already before him in his own day. The brutal character of the ungodly power, which he denotes by this expression, discovers itself more and more manifestly in the present age.—Bengel says, "These are two excellent instruments, and when they shall have accomplished their task so stedfastly, such is the recompense they are to receive for it from the world; they are to find tribulation, pain, mockery, and death; so that these are not bad marks." No, assuredly not, in a church whose Lord has been crucified, and who has said, "If they have called the master of the house Beëlzebub, how much more will they call those of the household! They shall cast you out of the synagogue. Nay, the time shall come when he that killeth you shall think that he doeth God service."

Ver. 8. *And their corpse shall lie upon the street of the great city, which is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt, where also their*[1] *Lord was crucified.* Ver. 9. *And they of the peoples,*

[1] Luther has: Our Lord, from the reading ἡμῶν.

and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead corpse three days and an half, and shall not suffer their corpses to be laid in the grave. Ver. 10. *And they that dwell on the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and send gifts one to another, because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth.* The great city is Jerusalem. But the honourable name is purposely not used. It is reserved for a better occasion. So we also, in our times of apostacy, can only speak with trembling lips of a church. We are here, however, not to think of the literal Jerusalem; but Jerusalem denotes the church as degenerate on account of the ascendancy of the world, and filled with offences, as the new Jerusalem is the purified and glorified church. The *spiritually* is also to be supplied to the expression: where our Lord was crucified. Outwardly the Lord was crucified in the city called Jerusalem, but spiritually in the degenerate church. The spiritual Jerusalem is compared to Egypt on account of the religious corruption with which it infected Israel in the early period of Israelitish history—comp. Ez. xxiii. 3, 8, 27, "Thou shalt not remember Egypt any more;" and ver. 19, "She called to remembrance the days of her youth, when she played the harlot in the land of Egypt," that is, embraced her idolatry. By Sodom, on the other hand, in the original passages of the Old Testament, the morals are constantly referred to—comp. Deut. xxxii. 32; Isa. i. 10; Ezek. xvi. 46, 48; Jer. xxiii. 14.[1] The great city itself, the degenerate church, has its share in the guilt of killing the witnesses, as formerly it had a part in the death of our Lord, whose treatment is only repeated over again in the history of his servants; according to the word: the servant is not greater than his master. When the church is overrun by the world, then seeming faith, half faith, and false faith, play the part of giving up the true witnesses of the Lord to unbelief for crucifixion. By its faithlessness the world is rendered bold. Then it imagines it has done a good work, when it has persecuted the true servants of God, and abandons itself to extravagant joy, when it has got their fearless mouth shut from uttering any more its testimony. But the judgment of this

[1] Vitringa incorrectly by the fundamental passages: "Egypt, on account of the oppression, which it exercised on the people of God, but Sodom on account of the universal corruption that prevailed in it.

world when clothed as the church, of the world in the church, shall be frightful, far more frightful than the judgment on the world, that appears simply as the world. We perceive this in the fate of the literal Jerusalem.—The *three days and an half* are in one respect an imitation of the history of the Lord, whom his servants must follow, and in another they point, like the three and an half years, to the seven as the signature of the kingdom of God, on which account the half day is added. The victory of the world is always but a transitory one.—Very characteristic is the expression that these prophets *tormented* those that dwell upon the earth. The members and servants of Christ are but a little flock, they stand in a small minority in respect to the world and the half-faith party. They have no other weapons than the word. Why, then, should men not leave them in silent contempt to pursue their course? why hate and persecute them? For no other reason, than because their word, so weak and contemptible in itself, has an ally in the hearts and consciences of those against whom it is directed. It is this that makes their word, and their whole existence, indeed, a source of torment to those who dwell upon the earth. However freely they may laugh and mock, they must still gnash their teeth. Their very hatred gives evidence against them. If the witnesses had not these allies in the hearts of the world and of the false seed in the church, it would be a piece of great folly for them to open their mouth any more. But the declaration: These two prophets *tormented*, is a touch-stone, by which every one may learn, whether he fulfils his office in the right spirit and with proper zeal. So long as all speak well of us, or even let us go on unmolested, we may be perfectly certain, that we are still not in the right state, and consequently can look for no proper fruits from our operations. *For he who torments not, also blesses not.* The ground must first be pierced by the plough before the seed can be sown in it. But those only can rejoice in the tormenting power of the prophets, and console themselves under the pain, who are prepared with a feeling heart to be the object of hatred, who find it a torment to themselves that they must torment, and can apply to themselves what has been said of Christ, "He burns and cuts, but not as a tyrant; he does it as a true, and wise, and tender physician."

Ver. 11. *And after the three days and an half the Spirit of*

life entered into them from God, and they stood upon their feet, and a great fear fell upon those who saw them. Ver. 12. *And they heard*[1] *a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw it.* The form in which the triumph of the witnesses is here described after their apparent defeat, is taken from the history of Christ, whose ascension to heaven, though not related by John in his Gospel, yet attested here,[2] prefigured the destiny of his people, and possesses for them the character of a matter-of-fact prophecy. The ascent to heaven following on the crucifixion realizes itself in the true witnesses in various ways. First, in the perpetually recurring victory of the cause for which they sacrificed their lives, and which seemed to go down with their overthrow. Nothing can be more unreasonable than to faint, if this cause appears once more to be on the decline. For six thousand years a reviving has constantly succeeded to the death, so that we may well say, in spite of the laughter of the Jews, "Weep not, it is not dead, but sleepeth"—and, "Its spirit will come again, and it will presently stand on its feet." It appears also in the reviving of their memory on the earth. Is it not remarkable, that the names of all those who in their life-time have borne reproach, that an Athanasius, a Spener, a Franke, a Zinzendorf, bear even in the world a good report, while the names of its own prophets are covered with contempt? Finally, it is again realized in the heavenly glory, which they are given to inherit. "The teachers," says Scripture, "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." The enemies of the true witnesses cannot but see how they are raised to heaven. "Though wickedness may rage and carry itself insolently for a time, it must still be frightened and give way. What escapes from the enemies and rises to heaven, can no longer be touched by it, though it should put all its artillery in motion."

Ver. 13. *And at the same hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and in the earthquake seven*

[1] The reading ἤκουσα, I heard, is less supported, and against John v. 28. The sudden introduction of the Seer also has something strange in it.

[2] Comp. here ver. 8, Luke xxiv. 51, Acts i. 9, Mark xvi. 9; also on the words: and a great fear fell on those who saw, Matth. xxvii. 54; and on: at the same hour there was a great earthquake, Matth. xxvii. 51, 54, xxviii. 2.

thousand names of men[1] *were killed; and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.* It is the great privilege of the church, that while the Lord may indeed chastise her, he does not give her over to death; that his judgments, besides their destroying, have always at the sametime a healing character. Hence she can be joyful in the prospect of them, or even when she actually experiences them. For, however frightful they may look, and may even really be, the result still is, that her true members give glory to the God of heaven; and from their own experience are ever ready to repeat the song, "Praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever." But this also lies clearly before us here, that the matter does not pass off without heavy judgments, not in the world merely, but also in the church. So great is the depth of human corruption. The simple preaching of repentance and faith will not do it; but to bring things into a right state, God must first tear up the field by the plough of his visitations. "Now," says Bengel, "we are in a low state. But if the still advancing and horrible wickedness of men shall lead us astray, we must consider that the time is always coming nearer for God the Almighty putting every thing in order. What an astounding change will that make! How shall men then give up their boldness, impiety, and confidence!" If we lay it properly to heart, that the spirit of repentance can only be produced by divine judgments on the church, we shall feel that there is no longer any reason for crying peace, peace, with such as prophecy out of their own hearts, where no peace is, in order to make the day of wrath and of the righteous judgment of God appear as a phantom, when we may see the signs of it already gathering in the heavens. We shall rather take the prophet Habakkuk for our pattern, who begins his prophecy with a prayer to the God of the degenerate church, that he would appear for judgment against it—that he would again revive in it the dead spirit of righteousness and holiness—and shall only pray with him, "In wrath remember mercy."—The witnesses stand before the Lord of *the earth*, and he to whom the glory is given is called the God *of heaven*. This is the foundation of all witnessing for the truth,

[1] See in regard to the ὀνόματα on ch. iii. 4.

all joy in one's calling, all hope of a blessed result, that the Lord of the church is the Lord of heaven and of earth. He is at once the Alpha and the Omega, at once the beginning and the end, he who comes, as well as he who was. In firm faith should we commend the cause of the church to him, before whom all enemies upon earth are too feeble to render any effectual opposition.

We shall now take a glance at the views which have been adopted of the preceding section, different from ours.

According to some the temple and the holy city must not be the symbol of the church; but the vision must refer to the external temple, and the literal Jerusalem; and, indeed, to the fates of the restored temple and the Jerusalem of the last times. But no trace whatever is to be found here of Jerusalem and the temple being in ruins at the time of the vision;[1] nor any trace of a

1 Dr Hofmann, in his Weissagung und ihre Erfüllung, Th. II., p. 302, discovers in ver. 8 a reference to the prostrate state of Jerusalem: "Jerusalem is so called, because it has experienced an overthrow like Sodom, and a judgment like Egypt." But that the designations Sodom and Egypt refer to the sunk religious and moral condition, and not to the outward state, appears from the following considerations. 1. The expression, "where also their Lord was crucified," implies a participation on the part of the great city in the guilt of slaying the two witnesses, as previously in that of Christ's death, who was surrendered by a degenerate church to the world. 2. The words, "which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt," indicates that the point of comparison belongs to the spiritual territory, that the comparison goes upon the analogous state of the spiritual life. Vitringa: "But the spiritual import is what we call the intellectual, which is derived from a more inward, profound, and intellectual view of the things under consideration; it is what the Hebrews are wont to call allegorical, inward, intellectual, occult, secret and hidden." When the point of comparison lies merely in externals, there no place exists for the activity of the πνεῦμα, there the comparison does not belong to the territory of the spirit. 3. Egypt does not elsewhere occur as a distinguished example of the punitive righteousness of God, so that it might be sufficient to name it, in order immediately to suggest that, nor could it be so used. But in regard to the state of complete spiritual corruption and profligacy, both Egypt and Sodom had become alike proverbial; and a comparison of the degenerate church of God with them was the more natural, as Egypt had in ancient times infected it with its pollution (comp. Ezek. xxiii. 3, 8, 27), and Sodom stood for centuries as a frightful example before the eyes of the covenant people. 4. That the great city is not without a share in the guilt of killing the two witnesses, that the dead bodies of these lay on its street, that they also cried to God against it for vengeance, and not merely against the heathen who trod upon the holy city; this is clear from the judgment which, according to ver 13, fell upon the city in consequence of the death of the witnesses, and was only what might be expected from ver. 2, according to which the court of the temple was to be thrown out and given to the heathen. Apostates, too, are always the bitterest enemies and persecutors of the true witnesses and faithful confessors of Jesus Christ. For all these reasons, Sodom and Egypt are quite in their place as designations of a spiritual state, and as such are also strongly confirmed by the passages of Old Testament Scripture formerly quoted.

rebuilding to take place in the future, either here or in any other part of the book. But prophecy can never so entirely separate itself from the ground of the present, to influence which is always its more immediate object, and to which, therefore, it must constantly raise a bridge. On this also rests all certainty of exposition as to the future. And that the means should be provided for such certainty is a necessary consequence of the divine nature of prophecy. A truly divine prophecy cannot possibly swim in the air; nor can the church be left to mere guess-work in the exposition of Scripture, which has been given to her amidst the darkness. Then, this literal method of exposition belongs to an entire chain of representations in regard to the kingdom of God, which has recently indeed, and especially in England, obtained extensive support, where in particular the society for the conversion of the Jews is pervaded by it. We cannot, however, regard it as agreeable to Scripture. It is a kind of revival of the Jewish-Christian tendency in the ancient church—the idea that the converted Jews in it are to form a sort of spiritual nobility in the church, and that for them as a separate, distinguished, and most illustrious part of it, there are destined quite peculiar honours and wonderful performances. We may almost say that this view is the worm in the noble fruit of the Jewish mission, the success of which is now rather poor. It nourishes in the converted the natural pride, the extirpation of which should be one of the first objects of a true spiritual activity. It misleads the converted to form a sort of peculiar brotherhood among themselves, and prevents them from properly incorporating themselves with the general society of the Christian church, in which alone the means of recovery can be found for so many wounds as they have necessarily brought along with them from the corrupt social life of their nation. Let us here also look back to the soundness of the older church, not out of reverence to it, but because it has Scripture rightly understood on its side, and cease to change Jewish Christians into Christian Jews. The result of a free and enlightened investigation of Scripture in reference to this point is expressed by the excellent Vitringa in these words: "This distinction is entirely taken away under the new economy. For, as the heathen, who were converted to Christ, were graffed in to the Jewish olive-tree, and have taken on them,

as it were, the person and form of the Jews; so shall the Jews, who in the latter days shall be converted to Christ, be graffed into that church of the heathen, or rather become incorporated with the mystical and spiritual Jews, and without any difference possess along with them the same condition in the kingdom of Christ. All are one in Christ." He remarks also specially in respect to the Revelation, "I would particularly draw attention to this, that throughout the whole of this book no separate mention is made of the Jewish as distinguished from the Gentile Christians, and this on the clear and obvious ground, that under the new œconomy all distinction of races in matters of religion is taken away. Never in any part of the Apocalypse do prophecies occur in respect to the Jews, in so far as these are opposed in matters of religion to the heathen." Since one cannot forbear to assent to what Vitringa says in regard to the Revelation, the view sustains on this ground alone a heavy blow. For, we are thus driven generally out of the territory of the New Testament, there being scarcely any passages elsewhere which one could even attempt to bring in support of the view in question. The declarations in the epistle to the Romans are rather unfavourable to this view. They speak much of the blessing, which the conversion of the Jews shall bring to the church of the future, but nothing whatever of a new church from the Jews, of the restoration of Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the temple, nor generally of a return of the old beggarly elements, which have been completely swept away by Christ and his blood, placing all nations on a footing. The question is thus thrown entirely back upon the Old Testament, and so, the position maintained on the other side becomes a very difficult, or rather a quite hopeless one. We must leave it to the Jews, to draw from the Old Testament *alone* articles of faith and expectations of the future. We Christians apply in the first instance to the New Testament, and if we find anything in the Old Testament, which seems to oppose it, or to go beyond it, this only serves to indicate our want of a proper understanding. What appears there to favour the modern Judaistic view, rests merely on this want as to its foundation. If any one is ready to conclude, that wherever Israel is spoken of, the Jews are meant, he can certainly prove much; but little good will be done by such a light and superficial mode of expounding the Old Testament

Scriptures. What the Spirit has spoken must be spiritually understood, as the sayings everywhere apply: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear; he that reads, let him understand; here is the mind that hath wisdom. Even the promises given to the patriarchs do not respect the children of Israel as opposed to believers from among the heathen; but comprehend along with them such as might be ingrafted into the olive tree, Rom. xi. 17, 24. (See the investigations on the promises made to the patriarchs in the Christol. III. p. 50, ss.) An olive tree, a people of God stands from first to last—an Israel out of which the false seed is excluded, and into which believers from among the heathen were adopted.

According to another view, which we may call the Rationalistic, although unfortunately it is not supported merely by Rationalists, the temple is the second temple of the Jews, the holy city, the Jerusalem still not laid in desolation by the Romans. In this prophecy they find the most undoubted proofs that the Revelation was composed before the taking of Jerusalem, and therefore not, according to the ecclesiastical tradition, under Domitian. The patriotism of the author of the book could not embrace the idea of a complete destruction of the temple and city, though he descries an approaching judgment, but he lightens the matter as much as possible; of the temple he gives up only the outer court, and of the holy city and its inhabitants only the tenth part.[1]

This view must be regarded as one of the most singular proofs of the modern subjective tendency, which judges of every thing by itself. On the territory of sacred Scripture that pseudo-patriotism, that blind partiality for one's own people, is never in place. Our Seer would stand quite alone with it. As the prophets, before the Chaldean desolation, with one voice predicted this, as it was then held to be a mark of a deceiver, of a prophet speaking out of his own heart, when any one denied, that the full

1 These expositors, in opposition to their own canon, that it is against the custom of the prophets to give definite predictions, hold that here there is really a very exact and precise announcement of what was to come: the court shall be taken possession of, but the holy city not. That Ewald was not without a sense of this difficulty, is evident from the words he has shoved in: *Si forte* exterius templum hostium lubido invadet. This also shews the inadmissibility of the literal view, that in the actual temple, in the temple proper, in which we are here placed, there were no worshippers.

measure of sin was to be followed by the full measure of punishment; so precisely in our day do those brand themselves in the eyes of believers with the stamp of false teachers, who say peace, peace, where there is no peace, who on the very eve of judgment are doting about a glorious era for Germany. The prophets after the Babylonish captivity likewise announced with one voice, a coming *second* total desolation, which was to break in as soon as the sin, which had begun again in their day to germinate, should have reached its maturity and brought forth fruit—that, namely, which was to be effected by the Romans, and whose internal connection with the Chaldean was made palpable by divine providence ordering it to take place on the very same day that the other had done. Our Lord rests on these prophecies of the Old Testament, when he says in Luke, ch. xxi. 22, "For these are the days of vengeance, when all that is written shall be fulfilled;" and in Matt. xxiv. 15, where he distinctly alludes to the properly classical prophecy, that in Dan. ix. 24—27, which was usually referred by the Jews, before the catastrophe by the Romans, to a future destruction of the city and temple. (See the proofs in my Beitr. I. p. 265, Christol. II. p. 576.) If the abomination of desolation on the holy city announced by Daniel stands; that is, if the abomination, which, according to the eternal law of recompense, according to the principle, "I will sanctify myself on them that draw near to me," has desolation for its inseparable consequence, then deliverance is only to be found in the curse; because by the faithful word of God, uttered by Daniel, all was to go to ruin. What Daniel declared, when the city and temple still lay in ashes, pointing to a second desolation lying on the farther side of the approaching restoration announced by him, was also intimated by Zechariah shortly after the return of the people, and the city and temple had begun to be rebuilt. God's righteousness is not less energetic than men's sinfulness; a new, severe, and destructive judgment shall break in, according to ch. v. 1—4, a new captivity, a long exile, ver. 5—11, another entire desolation of the land by an enemy coming out of the north. The prophecy of the last among the prophets, Malachi, is entirely of a threatening character. "Behold," it said in ch. iv., "the day comes burning like an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that comes shall burn them up,

saith the Lord of hosts, who shall not leave them root or branch." His prophecy, and with that the whole volume of Old Testament prophecy, runs out into the threatening, that the Lord will come and smite the land with a curse. First—such is the conclusion of Malachi's prophecy—Elias the prophet comes and endeavours to restore all (Reformation), then the Lord himself appears, and smites the land with a curse. The messenger makes a last attempt to sanctify the Lord in his people. Then the Lord sanctifies himself upon those, with whom this attempt has proved fruitless. The Old Testament prophecy revives once more in John the Baptist. He threatens with the baptism of fire, declares that the axe is laid to the root of the trees, and points to a day of coming wrath. Christ, our Lord, was certainly a patriot; he wept over Jerusalem; but the approaching destruction of the city and temple stands as clearly before his soul as if it were actually present—a pattern to us, whose eyes are so much rivetted to the visible, whose knowledge and hatred of sin are so dull, whose apprehension of the avenging righteousness of God is so languid, and who are so apt to think that the storm, which appears in the far distance, shall somehow blow past. He says of Jerusalem in Luke xix. 43, 44, "The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation." He says of the temple in Matthew, ch. xxiv. 2, "See ye not all these things? There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down."[1] As by the word of his mouth our Lord thus announced the approaching destruction, so did he also by the symbolical actions of the cursing of the fig-tree, and the purification of the temple.

Now, it seems quite incredible that a Seer, who was educated with such pains, who, as his visions shew, had received into his

1 Comp. Mark xiii. 2, Luke xxi. 5, and in regard to the city still farther, Luke xxi. 10, ss.; in regard to the temple, John ii. 19, and Matt. xxiii. 38, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate"—a passage which also indirectly refers to the city. The temple comes into notice as the seat of the whole nation. If its former inhabitants were thrown out, they must lose their right to the holy city, which is to be regarded as an appendage of the temple, and this must be devoted to destruction.

soul the prophecies of the Old Testament, should altogether renounce the earnest spirit of prophecy, should know his people after the flesh, and in a foolish patriotism conjure up illusions respecting the future;—incredible, that one, who everywhere makes himself known as a decided follower of Christ, who was filled with such profound reverence toward him, that when he saw him he fell down before him as one dead, who regarded it as the most honourable title to be called Christ's servant, should yet have acted contrary to him in a point so important, so variously treated, and so distinctly and prominently brought forward. An exposition, which yields such a result, bears on its front the stamp of reprobation.

The force of this argument, in so far as it respects the contrast presented to the declarations of Christ, has been felt by the defenders of this exposition themselves. But the diversified attempts which they have made to justify themselves, only serve to discover more clearly with what weight it presses upon them.

Ewald thinks that, when one looks into the matter more closely, Christ never speaks of the desolation of the city, but always only of the desolation of the temple. Were it so, the difficulty would only be lessened, not removed; for, the prophecy announces not merely the preservation of the city, but also of the temple, with the exception only of the court. But the assertion itself, as a single glance shews, is a mere fancy; the desolation of the city was foretold by our Lord as distinctly and repeatedly as that of the temple; and, according to the whole style of scriptural representation, the fates of both are inseparably bound up together; the temple could not fall without the city. For, the desolation of the temple is the sign of reprobation and rejection; and this must also disclose itself in the overthrow of the city.

Lücke hesitates about ranking John in the number of patriotic dreamers. "The prophet," he says in his Apocalyptic Studies, "as a truly inspired Christian, could not less hate an antichristian, persecuting Judaism, than an antichristian, persecuting heathenism." He seeks to get rid of the opposition to the declarations of Christ by making the apostle prophesy, not of the preservation, but of the desolation of the city and temple. He says, "The temple of Jerusalem, as the centre of Judaism, was to be desolated, only the Most Holy Place preserved. But the destruction

of the earthly temple encloses the destruction of the holy city as such in itself." The truth, however, is, that the temple is preserved, and only the court given up, and consequently Lücke's own words respecting the inseparable connection between the city and the temple turn against himself: the non-desolation of the temple includes in itself the non-desolation of the city. That this is to be thought of as not destroyed, is evident besides from ver. 13, according to which only the tenth part of the city falls, only seven thousand men, who are hence to be understood to be the tenth part of the inhabitants of the city, are killed; the rest give God the glory, and consequently are preserved—a proportion perfectly analogous to that between the temple and its court—while the prophet, in ch. xviii., cannot find words enough to describe the full and entire overthrow of Babylon.

Finally Baur, on the Kanon. Evangelien, p. 605, would in his usual way cut the knot, which Ewald and Lücke have tried in vain to loose. He remarks, "How could the Apocalyptist have overlooked the destruction of Jerusalem—how must he not rather have taken it for a main point of his Apocalyptic representations, if Jesus had really prophesied concerning it, as he is reported to have done in the Gospel of Matthew? In Rev. ch. xi. the Apocalyptist only prophesies, that the holy city should be trodden down by the heathen for three years and an half; yet the temple, along with the inner court (?) was to be preserved." Baur is here, as very commonly, in the right as regards those with whom he has immediately to do; it is more scientific to get rid with violence of the contrariety between the disciple and the master, than innocently to ignore it, or by an arbitrary exposition conceal it; but the method is still too heroic to be generally followed. That our Lord announced the destruction of the city and the temple is unanimously testified by all the Evangelists. The declarations are so often-repeated, so extended, so entwined with the history, that to give them up would be virtually to surrender the historical character of all the Gospels. They have an important foundation in the prophecies of the Old Testament, on which they lean. That they had also made their way to those without, appears from Mark, ch. xiv. 58. They formed a leading point in the charges brought against the Lord.

But now let it be farther observed, that in the prophet the

ground shews itself to have absolutely no existence, in which such a vicious Jewish patriotism could take root, as is here supposed to have wrought with the frightful energy of leading the Seer to contradict his Master to his face. He who is truly in Christ can no longer know any one after the flesh; he to whom Christ is what he was to the author of this book, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the Prince of the kings of the earth, who has loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood, and has made us kings and priests to God and his Father—such a person is raised entirely above the territory of mere Jewish sympathies. These are to be found out of Judaism only among half Christians, with those who, in their meagre acquaintance with the glory of Christ, have never attained to the full knowledge of the difference between Judaism and Christianity.

Not merely, however, from the Apocalyptic Seer's relation to Christ, but also from his express and pointed polemical declarations against Judaism, we could shew how very far such a vicious Jewish patriotism lay from him. In the epistle to the angel of the church of Smyrna the Lord says, "I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan." In the epistle to the angel of the church of Philadelphia it is said, "Behold I will give out of Satan's synagogue of those who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will cause them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." The position which the Seer in these declarations takes up toward the unbelieving Jews, is as strong and offensive as it could well be. They are plainly characterized as persons unworthy of the name of Jews, and belonging to the community of Satan. That it is not single individuals of improper character that are discoursed of, but the whole fraternity as such, is evident from the expression: Satan's synagogue, "a parody of the title, Jehovah's congregation (Numb. xvi. 3, &c.,) with which they flattered their vanity" (Züllig.) These declarations coincide with the peculiarly strong things that are recorded in the Gospel of John against the Jews, ch. viii. 44, "Ye are of your father the devil," spoken in reply to the pretension of the Jews in ver. 41, "We have one father, God."[1] On

1 Dr Bleek would conclude from these declarations, that the position of the Apocalypse against Judaism is a different one from that of the gospel: "While the gospel uses

the other hand, there was always a bridge between Judaizing Christians and unconverted Jews. Whoever has broken with these as completely as our Seer has done, to him the temple at Jerusalem can be nothing else than a den of robbers,[1] as our Lord himself called it in Matth. xxi. 13. He must therefore have denied it the name of the temple. As he recognises none to be Jews but the Christians, so he can own no other temple but the Christian church. When Bleek understands by those who, in ch. xi., worship in the temple, "the pious servants of God among the inhabitants of Jerusalem," "together with the Christians such also as, without belonging to the Christian church, worshipped their God in purity of conscience," he speaks, indeed, good Schleiermacheran, but bad Apocalyptic doctrine. The crisis by that time was quite past; the nobler elements had long ago been absorbed by the Christian church; the synagogue of Satan retained only the scum. Such illusions of a superficial fleshly

the designation *the Jews* as alone indicating the higher class among the Jewish people in their character of opposition to the truth, and decided hostility to the Redeemer, this name is a very honourable one with the Apocalyptist; insomuch that he calls the Jews, who obstinately opposed the gospel, or wickedly persecuted it, not properly Jews, but regards them as falsely taking to themselves that name." In reality the representation is the same in both, differing only in the form, according to the different kinds of writing in the two cases. The historian employs the usual name; the prophet, on the other hand, who rises above the common reality and its empty names, denies to those Jews, who wanted the substance, also the name. How little such diversities infer a difference in the authorship, is plain from the fact of our Lord, in John viii. 37, 39 ("I know that ye are the seed of Abraham," and again, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the deeds of Abraham"), employing almost in one breath both the real and the ideal manner of designation.

1 And at what period did the temple *more* deserve this name than shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, to which the composition of the Apocalypse is transferred by those who understand by the temple in ch. xi. the temple at Jerusalem? Even Josephus describes that temple quite similarly, as a place in which latterly all manner of abominations became concentrated. And this sink of abominations must the author of the Apocalypse, less enlightened than Josephus, have taken for the true sanctuary of the Lord, and sought to preserve from destruction? The untenableness of the position, which the modern theology ascribes to the Apocalypse, discovers itself also here. Any one that regarded the temple at Jerusalem so, could have obtained neither a canonical nor a deuterocanical place for his book. Hofmann has justly said in his Weiss. und Erf. II. p. 301, "When Galba was emperor, Eleazar's zealots had possession of the temple, from whence they robbed and murdered in the city; in the temple itself they despatched the blameless Zecharias, and practised horrors which the tongue trembles to utter. Must the author of the Apocalypse have been so very Jewishly inclined, that he should have wished to preserve the theatre of these barbarities? Are *those* zealots to be now regarded as the worshipping company of the Apocalypse? or shall the two witnesses be discovered in Eleazar and John of Gishala?"

benevolence, are quite remote from the author of the Apocalypse, against whom Baur, and with some right from his point of view, brings the charge, on account of the epistle to the Laodiceans, of being a gross fanatic: "who would allow nothing lukewarm, hence also nothing of an ordinary and middle character; he has always in his eye sharp contrasts." Whoever regards Judaism as the author of the Apocalypse did, he could the less mean by the temple that at Jerusalem, as here the discourse is simply of the temple, not of *a* place of worship to the Lord, but, without any qualifying term, of his sanctuary on earth, while yet of this our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, and now is, when neither in Jerusalem nor in this mountain shall men worship the Father." No one viewing Judaism as our author did, could possibly think of it as having such noble powers of life slumbering in it, as that so comparatively mild a judgment should have sufficed to set them free—that the fall of the tenth part of the city and the death of the tenth part of the inhabitants should have had the effect of "terrifying the rest, and leading them to give glory to the God of heaven." Such powers of life, according to the view taken in the Apocalypse, grow only out of Christ's blood and redemption. For Satan's synagogue tribulation is as fruitless as for the heathen, and even more so. It can only produce rage in such characters, the dark zealot-spirit.

If we allow to these cardinal passages on the relation of the Apocalypse to Judaism their full weight, we shall have no hesitation from the outset what to make of the proofs for the Judaising spirit of the author, which some have been at pains to bring forward. We may, however, look at them somewhat closely. After the example of Lücke, Baur presses the fact of the author speaking only of twelve apostles at ch. xxi. 14, as having their names on the foundations of the new Jerusalem; so that he must have excluded the apostle Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. Bleek has justly remarked in opposition to this, that the Jews were wont to speak of their twelve tribes, without thereby excluding any portion of the people from their community. The same thing is done also here, immediately before, in ver. 12; and if the apostle would not depart from what had been so long consecrated as a symbol of the church, the number twelve, he must

likewise adhere to it in the corresponding number of the apostles. The twelve number of the apostles, which certainly had no accidental origin, was regarded as so inviolable, that even Paul, in 1 Cor. xv. 5, says that Christ was seen of the twelve, after Judas had been parted from them. How much less could it be imagined, that the author of the Apocalypse was to speak of thirteen apostles—he who throughout lays such great stress upon the numbers? Only if one were to understand really what was meant ideally, could one have desired him in such a way to do violence to the consecrated signature of the church, and render it unintelligible. And we can the less think of any intentional exclusion of Paul, as that very passage alludes to a declaration of his in Eph. ii. 20, and the more to be regarded as there are also in other parts of the Apocalypse a great number of allusions to the epistles of Paul.[1]

Baur remarks farther, "What a great contrast exists between the stand-point of the Apocalypse, by which the kingdom of God has its genuine, its truly believing and blessed members only out of Judaism, and that of the gospel, which sees in Judaism only the kingdom of unbelief." On the contrary, we maintain that the Revelation knows of no prerogatives belonging peculiarly to the Jews in the kingdom of God; Gentile Christians have perfectly equal rights imputed to them with the Jewish brethren; so much so, that the Seer makes no account of any distinction between Jewish and Gentile believers, he knows only of one holy Catholic church. And from this fact we draw the conclusion that the exposition of this section, which regards it as containing Jewish patriotic phantasies, cannot possibly be right. Which of the two opposite views is the correct one, must be determined by an examination of the particular passages.

[1] Especially remarkable and undeniable are the references to Col. i. 15—18. On the πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν in ver. 18, comp. in Rev. i. 5, πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν. This peculiar expression occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and was manifestly framed by Paul, as may be seen from the relation to ver. 15. The ἀρχή in ver. 18 of Col. is found also in Rev. xxii. 13 and iii. 14. The ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως there points to the πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως in ver. 15. A word is substituted for πρωτότοκος in ver. 18, by which it is explained. It is to be observed that this reference occurs in the epistle to the Laodiceans, for whom, according to Col. iv. 16, the epistle to the Ephesians was also intended. Comp. besides Rev. i. 4, with Paul's form of salutation, i. 9, with 2 Tim. ii. 2, 12; ii. 10 with Phil. ii. 8; xix. 8 with 2 Cor. xi. 2, &c.

The first passage that demands attention is ch. v. 8, 10. "Then the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book and to open its seals, for thou wert slain and hast redeemed us[1] to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.[2] And hast made them (the persons so redeemed) kings and priests to our God, and they shall reign upon the earth." This passage is quite plain and clear: in the kingdom of God there is neither Jew nor Greek, it brings its members out of all peoples of the earth to the possession of the same rights, to be kings and priests, which is the highest dignity that can be conceived in the kingdom of God. And this enlarged oecumenical mode of representation is not like a thing that swims in the air, so that it might be regarded as a kind of isolated ray of light; it has its foundation in the worth that is here ascribed to Christ's blood—comp. on ch. xii. 11, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." All Judaism has its root in defective views of the great work of redemption. He who perceives in Christ the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world, is thereby raised quite above the contracted and partial Jewish spirit.

The second passage is ch. vii. 1—8. Here we have represented, in an episode between the sixth and seventh seals, the safe preservation of the members of the church amid the great plagues which befal the unbelieving and apostate world. The grace of God manifested toward them and protecting them, appears under the image of a seal, which is imprinted on them, be-

[1] Ewald and Bleek would expunge ἡμᾶς, "as it cannot be thought that the author of the Apocalypse would have it to be understood that not merely the four and twenty elders in heaven, but also the Cherubim, represent themselves as those who have been redeemed out of all nations by the blood of the Lamb, and who shall again reign on the earth." But to the four beasts, the ideal representatives of the living earthly creation, belongs, as was shown in our exposition, only the falling down; the ἔχοντες has immediate respect only to the four and twenty elders, and of these only does the nature of things permit us to think: the Cherubim cannot be conceived as doing the part of harpers. But the elders do not act in their own name; they do so as representatives of the saints: they have vials full of incense, which are the prayers of saints—comp. also ch. xiv. 2, xv. 2, where the saints themselves have harps.

[2] Isaiah had already said, in ch. lxvi. 18, "And I—their works and thoughts. A time comes for gathering all heathen and tongues"—the Jewish people are rejected, the heathen world called.

fore the wind blows upon the earth; that is, before the storm of tribulations breaks in upon the world with its desolating and destructive fury. To a superficial view the precedence of the Jews has here certainly some appearance of support. It is not only the children of Israel in general that are spoken of, but particular Jewish tribes also are singled out from the rest, as those to whom the sealed belong. But no one that is a little advanced in the investigation of Scripture will allow himself to be at once carried away by appearances of this sort. By a mode of contemplation in Scripture deeply rooted and widely diffused, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the fathers of all believers; from the very beginning of the arrangements respecting salvation to the end of the world, there is but one people of God, the sons of Abraham and of Israel, from the number of whom they are excluded, who give way to a spirit of unbelief and backsliding, even though they have been born among them, according to the oft-repeated expression, "that soul is cut off from among his people;" while, on the other hand, those who have faith, wherever they may have been born, attain to equal rights with the native members. It is from this point of view that our Lord, for example, speaks to his disciples in Matt. xix. 28, "Verily I say to you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." That the twelve tribes of Israel are here used not in the ordinary Jewish sense, that they rather denote the whole church of God, is as certain as the calling of the apostles had respect, not to Israel in the narrower sense, but to all nations, Matth. xxviii. 19. Indeed, in the calling of the apostles themselves our Lord was guided by this mode of viewing things—as certainly as the twelve number of the apostles has respect to the twelve tribes of Israel. The same mode is followed also by James, when he addresses his epistle to the "twelve tribes scattered abroad," to the Israel out of Palestine, in the dispersion; and by Peter, when he writes to the "elect strangers scattered abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." Both of them certainly did not wish to *exclude* the Gentile Christians, who, as appears from the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles of Paul, were then united with Jewish Christians in those regions into one Christian body; nor did they

mean to *include* the unchristian Jews. They addressed both the genuine original sons, and the sons by adoption. This manner of contemplation is followed also by the author of the Apocalypse himself, in ch. xxi. 12, according to which the city, that symbolizes the church in the kingdom of glory, the city in whose light the Gentiles walk, ch. xxi. 24, into which all without distinction of nation are received, who have overcome, ch. xxi. 7, and from which all are excluded without distinction of nation, who have done abomination and lies, ver. 27, has names written on its gates which are the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. The question, therefore, arises, Does the Seer here speak of Israel and its tribes in this sense, or in the ordinary Jewish one? If in the former, there is nothing to imply an undue ascendancy of the Jews over others. For, the honour of being the kernel and trunk of the people of God, even under the New Testament, is accorded to them in all Scripture, and nowhere more decidedly than in the writings of the apostle Paul (Rom. ix. and xi.); nor can it be denied them, without falling out with history, which declares the communication of the gospel to the heathen to have been made by means of believing Jews; without finding the conduct of Christ incomprehensible in confining the preaching of salvation primarily to the Jews; and without destroying the continuity of the kingdom of God, which unfortunately is very much lost sight of by the style of thought now prevalent, as also by orthodox theologians, to the great detriment not only of theology, but also of a living faith. For, if we tear asunder the two testaments, we leave the Old to be regarded as primarily destined for the Jews, and retain only the New for Christians; and thus rob the first of a great part of its edifying character for the Christian church, and receive only some disjecta membra of the writings of Scripture, as fitted now to exercise a direct and proper influence. Those who have not the Old Testament, possess the New also in a very imperfect manner.

If we turn now to answer the proposed question, there can be no doubt that the prophet speaks here of Israel and his tribes in the spiritual or Christian sense. We could prove this without calling to our aid ch. xiv., where the 144,000 again appear, and where they quite undeniably represent the whole company of Christians. In the chapter before us itself, those, whose preser-

vation from the plagues that were to alight on the wicked is depicted in ver. 1—8, for their consolation in the time of trial, are presented to our view in the possession of that final glory which awaited them. They are spoken of there as being taken out of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, and hence from these also must the 144,000 have been formed.[1] That we must not stick to the letter, is clear also from the omission of the tribe of Dan, for a purely theological reason, in order not to exceed the number twelve ;[2] from the number being the same in the small

1 The supposition of Hofmann is quite inadmissible, that the numberless multitude out of all kindreds and nations, in ver. 9, is placed over against the 144,000 out of Judaism. There would then have been promised to the Jewish believers only preservation upon earth, and to those from among the Gentiles only heavenly felicity.—The objections which Bleek has raised against the identification of the 144,000 with the numberless multitude can very easily be disposed of. He says, first, it is not probable that, if the entire number was given at 144,000, they should immediately after be described as a multitude which no one could number. But in ch. xiv. 1, 2, the voices of the 144,000 are also compared with the noise of many waters, and of loud thunder. Numerable usually stands in Hebrew for what can easily be numbered; compare, for example, Isa. x. 19. Any one looking at a multitude of 144,000 would at once lose all thought of numbering. Balaam says, in Num. xxiii. 10, "Who can determine the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" already, therefore, the fourth part of Israel was held to be innumerable, and yet the whole was twice numbered during the march, and in that very book, in which such an explanation is given of Israel's being innumerable, the precise numbers are recorded; whereas here only a round number, of a thoroughly ideal import, is given, and such as only expresses in another form the idea of an innumerable multitude. For that the number has no real signification is manifest alone from its relation to the twelve as the signature of the covenant-people. Again, it is objected by Bleek that the 144,000 are in ver. 4 expressly described as sealed out of *all* the tribes of Israel—an expression that could scarcely have been chosen if it was meant as the entire sum of the members of these tribes, and not as an announcement of believers sealed out of the entire number of members in these tribes. But this reason can only tell against Bleek's earlier hypothesis, according to which the twelve tribes must be divisions in the New Testament kingdom of God itself. The twelve tribes are the twelve Jewish tribes (for in the whole of Scripture there is but one Israel, and the distinction made in the older theology of a corporeal and a spiritual Israel, the Christian church, has no foundation), but the false seed are excluded, and the sons of adoption are brought in. As, therefore, a sediment, a sentina remains behind, the expression, "out of all the tribes of Israel," is quite suitable.

2 Hofmann improperly refers to the omission of Simeon in the blessing of Moses. The reason for that omission was, that Simeon received no separate territory, but dwelt under Judah, hence was blessed along with him, and obtained no peculiar blessing of his own. But in respect to the Messianic blessing, Dan had not an independent existence, and must not have failed, if the whole enumeration was to be taken in a realistic sense. The reason for the exclusion alone of Dan out of the number twelve, is, as already shewn, that the only narrative of the Old Testament, in which Dan played a part, is that respecting the worship of idols among the Danites, in the book of Judges. So that the sentiment "without are the idolatrous," in ch. xxii. 15, is here symbolically represented by the omission of Dan.

and the large tribes; and from the fact that the tribal distinctions were then lost.

The third passage is ch. xiv. 1—5. Here it is a piece of palpable caprice in Credner, Züllig, Baur, to understand by the 144,000 who stand around the Lamb on Mount Zion, Jewish Christians, and nothing but the most imperative necessity, or the giving up also of the preceding passages, could warrant us in adopting such a view. It has, however, nothing to support it; and there are the following reasons against it:—1. All the marks throughout the passage point to Christians in general: they have the name of Christ and the name of his Father written on their foreheads; they have been redeemed from the earth, from among men, they sing a new song before the throne and the four beasts, who represent the living creatures over all the earth; they have not defiled themselves with women, *i.e.*, sins (comp. Gen. iv. 7, where sin appears under the image of a woman, with iii. 16; Zech. v. 7, 8; Rev. ii. 20, 22), they follow the Lamb wherever he goes, in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without blame. These are all clear marks for distinguishing a true Christian in any age. With Jewish Christians, on the other hand, the first distinguishing mark was circumcision, which would have made an anomalous appearance in such a society. 2. Identical beyond doubt with the 144,000, who here stand on Mount Zion and sing the new song, are those who, in ch. xv. 2—4, stand on the sea of glass, and sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. These are described as the persons who have gotten the victory over the beast and his image. But according to ch. xiii. 7, the beast has power given to it over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation, that is, over the believers from among them. These, too, are the persons who here sing the song of the Lamb, and in ch. xiv., the new song. 3. The whole fourteenth chapter, the conclusion of the group, which treats of the three enemies of the kingdom of God, and their formidable war against it, ch. xii.—xiv., forms the antidote to the pain, which might be occasioned by the contents of ch. xiii., the representation of the great oppression caused by the beast. A glance is here first given, in ch. xiv. 1—5, into the heavenly blessedness of the elect. Now, if the song is of an oecumenical character, if it concerns the saints of all tongues and

nations, then the field embraced in the consolation can be no straitened one, it cannot possibly be limited to the Jewish territory.

Thus we have arrived at the result, that the Rationalistic exposition of our section is altogether untenable, because the supposition on which it rests, that the anthor of the Revelation had only one foot in Christianity, and another still in Judaism, is an utterly groundless one. On the contrary, it everywhere appears that he had taken for his motto, "Christ alone and all," and in the blood of the Lamb had been washed, as well from his Jewish sympathies, as from the other stains and imperfections of his old man.

But there is also another line of argument by which we can gain the same result. We perceive that everywhere else the things of Judaism serve only as the forms and symbols under which he represents the Christian; and all these analogies lead to the conclusion that he cannot possibly mean by the temple here the temple at Jerusalem—that he must intend by it what corresponds to it on the Christian territory, the Christian church. That by Israel the author does not denote those whom he thought worthy of the name on account of their corporeal descent from Jacob, but the entire body of true Christians, we have already seen. In like manner he holds no other to be Jews but true Christians (Vitringa on ch. ii. 9, "Jew in this book denotes one who is a Jew in secret, circumcised in heart, a true confessor of the faith.") Bold as it may seem, he must also deny to the temple at Jerusalem the name of the temple. The priests of the Revelation, who must of course have a temple corresponding to them, are not the Levitical, but all Christ's faithful people, who have been made priests to God, and his Father," i. 6, v. 10, xx. 6. Nay, the temple itself also occurs elsewhere in the Revelation in a spiritual sense, as a designation of the church of Christ. And this is the more decisive, as in each place alike the discourse is not of *a* temple, but precisely of *the* temple of God. Even in the first group, that of the epistles, it is said, ch. iii. 12, "He that overcomes, him will I make a pillar in the temple of our God, and he shall go no more out." On that passage it is well remarked by Vitringa, "That their position may be firm and immoveable in the heavenly temple, which is the symbol as well

of believers upon earth, as of the saints made perfect in glory. For under the new dispensation there is a house of God, to which all the saints have access, Heb. xii. 22." The going no more out here, forms the contrast to the throwing out in ch. xi. 2. Vitringa, "It must be understood passively, as if it had been written, He shall not be cast out. The Lord by his grace and providence would take care, that those among the Philadelphians, who, with a sincere spirit and a pure affection, had confessed the truth, should never be deprived of their state and dignity." In ch. xiii. 6, the tabernacle of God is a designation of his church, in connection with those, who dwell in heaven, believers in heaven and on earth, for the citizenship of the latter also is in heaven (Phil. iii. 20), the saints, as they are presently after named by way of explanation.[1] Further, the temple of the Lord in heaven, with the ark of the covenant, vii. 15, xi. 19, xiv. 15, 17, xv. 5, as the heavenly symbol of the church, implies, that the church upon earth also presented itself to the prophet under the same symbol. As it stands in regard to the temple, so does it also in regard to Jerusalem. Whenever it occurs besides in the Revelation, it never denotes the city so named in the vulgar sense, but always the church; and we should, therefore, need to isolate the section before us from all the rest of the book, were we to think here of the literal Jerusalem and the temple of Herod. By the "beloved city," which, according to ch. xx. 9, is to be encompassed and besieged by a revived heathenism at the close of the thousand years, Lücke himself understands "the society of believers upon earth," in other words, the Christian church; and yet there can be no doubt, that this beloved city is Jerusalem, so that Ewald is perfectly right in identifying the city here (in ch. xi.) and there. Vitringa remarks, "Allusion is made as well to Ps. lxxxvii. 2, 'The Lord loves the gates of Zion,' as to the vision in the next prophecy, xxi. 1—10, which represents the church under the image of Jerusalem, the holy city, beloved of God." How also could the prophet, in ch. iii.

1 Besides these parallel passages, it is in favour of the temple being regarded as the symbol of the church, that the prophecy of Ezekiel, ch. xl.—xlviii., to which an allusion in ver. 1 undoubtedly is made, unquestionably refers not to an external building, but to the spiritual temple of God's kingdom, as is evident in particular from ch. xlvii. As Ezekiel beheld the restoration of the church under the image of the temple given to be measured, so John beheld its preservation.

12, xxi. 2, 10, represent the church of the future world under the name of the new Jerusalem, unless he had already recognised the true Jerusalem in the church of the present? It was the new Jerusalem in contrast, not to that old material one, but to the spiritual beloved city in its imperfect condition here, from which this section itself tells us, how much it needs a renewal, with how many deficiencies and evils it is still beset. Finally, the heavenly Zion, with its 144,000 perfected saints, who sing there the new song before the throne, ch. xiv. 1—5, presupposes the existence of an earthly Zion, in which believers have been prepared for it by much tribulation. Those who stick to the letter, ought, as a necessary consequence, to abide here also by the literal Zion. If the triumphant church takes the name of Zion, the name must also be proper for the church militant. For, it cannot be applied to the church as triumphing, but only in so far as it is a church.[1]

With these facts before us, to attempt to interpret the section under consideration, according to the letter, would be a mere act of caprice; the more so, as the spiritual use of the language is very extensively employed also in the other books of the New Testament, even in some where it could far less be expected than in the Revelation. The passages in which the temple occurs as a designation of the Christian church, have already been adduced; in regard to Jerusalem; Gal. iv. 26, Hebr. xii. 22, are especially to be compared.

There are besides, however, many other reasons against the reference to the Jewish temple and the literal Jerusalem, and for the reference to the temple and the Jerusalem of the Christian church.

According to the seven epistles, which everywhere contain only individual applications of what is exhibited as a general delineation in the prophetical part, we could not but expect that the Seer, in the main delineation, would direct his eye upon the *internal* state of the church of the future. The preserving and rejecting agency of God in regard to the church, is the point that

1 Polycrates of Ephesus says, in his third epistle to the Roman bishop Victor, in Euseb. v. 24, of St John, "Ος ἐγενήθη ἱερεὺς τὸ πέταλον πεφορηκώς, certainly in the manner of John himself. In a spiritual understanding of the high-priesthood, he makes its nature to consist in the closest relationship to the Lord.

comes most prominently out in the epistles. The command, for example, "Measure the temple of God and the altar, and them that worship therein," connects itself closely with, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," ch. ii. 10, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the whole earth," ch. iii. 10. In like manner, the throwing out of the temple-court and not measuring it, is very nearly allied to such passages as the following, "If not, I will come to thee, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place," and, "I will spue thee out of my mouth," etc. That the church in the future was to undergo a great *sifting*, that it was never wholly to perish, but that many branches of the vine should become withered and useless, is a subject frequently unfolded in the epistles. But this agreement between our section and the epistles is destroyed, whenever we refer the former to Judaism, instead of to the Christian church. In its place, indeed, there comes a palpable discord. For the Judaism, whose preservation should in that case be announced here, is what is called the synagogue of Satan in the epistles.

One does not see, how a prediction respecting the future fates of the literal Jerusalem and the Jewish temple should have been introduced exactly here, pressed in between the sixth and seventh trumpets, the second and third woe, which have to do only with the world-power. On the other hand, by the spiritual interpretation, which refers it to the Christian church, the prophetical announcement is quite in its place. The judgments alight upon the world-power on account of the hostile attitude it has assumed against the church, and for the salvation of the latter. And it is well, in the meantime to see, what effect has been wrought in the church itself by the very dangerous encroachment upon it through the world-power—whether it has not been internally reduced to a level with the world; the more so, since if such were the case, the whole of the treatment to be inflicted on the world-power would lose its propriety. It has the preservation of the temple of God, and of those who worship in it, for its foundation.

The appearance of the angel of the Lord, which is described in the episode, ch. x. 1—xi. 13, has the double aim of first solemnly announcing, that the completion of the judgment upon the world,

and the glorifying of the church therewith connected, should certainly take place, and then of declaring how dreadfully the temple and Jerusalem would be imperilled by the encroachments of the world, though they should still be preserved. The two parts of the mission of the angel lose all internal connection, whenever by the temple we understand the Jewish one. But adopt the spiritual meaning, and that immediately becomes manifest. The danger brought to the temple and the city by the worldly intermixture in the church could not but awaken a doubt as to the final victory of the church, and her glorification, which was met by the solemn assurance given respecting the consummation. The final glorification of the church has for its basis the preservation of the church amid the temptations threatening it; without the patience of Christ, no participation in his kingdom.

The position of the two witnesses becomes incomprehensible, if ver. 1 and 2 are not referred to the Christian church. They are equally hated by the world-power—the beast which rises out of the abyss—and by the degenerate holy city, "which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified;" they were brought to death through the persecuting hatred of the degenerate community. On the degenerate holy city, according to ver. 13, the judgment alights, and that because of the despite it had done to their testimony. Between the world-power and the Jews, however, there existed no internal connection. But there did between the world-power and the Christian church, which through the encroaching pressure of the former was to become to a large extent leavened with the spirit of the world.

The beast, from which, according to ver. 7, proceeds the persecution of the two witnesses, has to do, according to ch. xiii. 7, 8, not with the literal Jerusalem, but with the saints, whose name is written in the book of the Lamb that had been slain. The whole war of the Dragon, which the beast serves (comp. xiii. 2) is waged against those, who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; comp. xii. 11.

The literal Jerusalem, at the time the Apocalypse was written, even taking the earliest date to which that has been ascribed, was no longer the theatre for the two witnesses. That Jerusalem had then ceased to be the seat and centre of the church—a dignity it lost at the moment of Christ's death, Matt. xxiii. 38—is

manifest alone from the seven epistles, which proclaim the complete separation of the church from Jerusalem and its temple. But the witnessing generally has its proper territory only in the church of God, though possibly degenerate, and that here also this is to be regarded as the sphere of action, is evident from the prototypes Moses and Elias, who came forth in the midst of God's church, and from the designation of the witnesses as the two olive-trees and the two lamps, which determine the region of their agency to be that of the Spirit and grace of God.

The result we have obtained is of importance in more than one point of view. First, the rejection of the ecclesiastical tradition respecting the composition of the Apocalypse under Domitian is thus deprived of one of its chief supports, and thereby an important vantage-ground is won for the correct exposition of the Apocalypse. But we have gained more than a mere fence. If here no judicial punishment is announced upon the Jews, in the only passage of the whole book where with some appearance of truth it might have been sought, that punishment must then be regarded as past, and the Revelation must consequently have been composed, not under Galba, but under Domitian. For, it is clear, that if Judaism had been already overthrown, the author could not have failed to announce its overthrow; he could not have occupied himself exclusively with the fall of heathenism, the less so as he had before his eyes the example of the Lord, from whom the overthrow of Jerusalem received so prominent a place.

Farther, it has now again been shewn how, what from the first is felt by a simple faith in the written word, that we have here holy ground, on which no patriotic imaginations and no products of common and impure human feeling are to be found, is fully confirmed by a careful and thorough investigation.

Finally, which is the point of greatest moment, it has become certain to us from the whole contents of the section, that the comforting assurance is there given us of the preservation of the church amid all temptations, the comforting assurance of our own preservation, if only we do not loiter about the court, but with the zeal which does violence to the kingdom, press into the temple itself.

Ch. xi. 14. *The second woe is past; behold, the third woe comes quickly.*

We have now in chap. xi. 15—19 the seventh trumpet, the third woe. The trumpet of the seventh angel sounds, and the blessed in heaven triumph, that now the universal dominion of their God and his Christ appears immediately in prospect, ver. 15. The heavenly representatives of the church, the four and twenty elders, give thanks to the Lord, that he now comes in his kingdom to execute judgment on the ungodly world, as also on the dead (raised to life again), and to reward the righteous, ver. 16—18. The catastrophe follows; the confidence of the blessed and of the elders is not put to shame; the strong angel, who in ch. x. 6, 7, had declared, that at the sounding of the seventh trumpet the completion of the mystery of God should take place without delay, keeps his word, ver. 19.—The conclusion of the vision of the seven trumpets points back to its beginning. In ch. viii. 3, 4, the prayers of the saints call for the judgment of God on the world; here the saints give thanks that the wrath of the Lord has come. In ch. viii. 5 voices, and lightnings, and thunders, and earthquakes, come forth as a symbolical announcement, that the world's judgment is approaching; in ver. 19 this symbolical announcement goes into complete fulfilment: amid lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and earthquakes, and great hail, the ungodly world is brought to ruin.

Ver. 15. *And the seventh trumpet sounded. And there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world has become our Lord's and his anointed's, and he will reign for ever and ever.* That we are to regard the great voices in heaven as chiefly at least proceeding from the great multitude, which no man could number, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands, the saints made perfect, arises from the nature of things. For these are that portion of the heavenly inhabitants who are specially interested in this event; they are called to reign with their Lord and his anointed, ch. v. 10; his entrance on the government is also theirs; they, the servants, now receive from their Lord the reward, ver. 18. It is evident also from the correspondence, in which the expression, "to his servants" there, stands to "our Lord" here. It farther appears from a comparison of the parallel passages. Those that have the closest connection with the one before us—much more close than ch. v.

11, 12, to which alone reference is commonly made—are ch. xii. 10, where "the great voice" in heaven, which celebrates the completed redemption of Christ and his right to rule over the world, springing out of that, is the voice of the church; and ch. xix. 1—8, where the great multitude in heaven, that proclaims with a loud voice on the fall of Rome, "Hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns," consists of saints, and apostles, and prophets—comp. ch. xviii. 20—those who fear God, great and small. The agreement with ch. viii. 3 also serves to determine "the great voices." If there the prayers of the saints cause the appearance of the angels with the seven trumpets, it can be no other than the saints who here triumph and give thanks, when the work of the seven angels was completed. Hence, though we may regard the angels generally as interested, as is shewn by ch. vii. 11, we should conceive of them as being so only in a subordinate manner, and by way of concurrence. First, the whole host of the saints made perfect step forth, and celebrate in a short speech the victory of their Lord and his anointed. Then, the heavenly representatives of the church, its elite as it were, take up the discourse, and bring fully out what the others only indicate; precisely as in ch. xix., first the multitude of believers step forth, and then the elders. Accordingly, the bearers of the great voices mentioned at the beginning, are given at the close. They are no others than the servants of God, and the saints, and those who fear his name, the small and the great, ver. 18. They are those, who also in ch. xv. 2—4, before the entering of the seven last plagues of God, celebrate his glorious deeds and his approaching final victory over the world, and who sing in ch. xiv. 3 the new song before the throne.—The kingdom, *βασιλεία*, signifies here the kingdom, not in the passive, but in the active sense—the dominion; comp. on ch. i. 6. In ch. xii. 6, xvii. 18, also, the kingdom occurs so. It is from not apprehending this import, that the explanatory reading followed by Luther, *ἐγένοντο αἱ βασιλεῖαι*, has arisen: the kingdoms of the world have become. Therefore, by the kingdom having become, etc., is meant: The government is (now) possessed by our Lord and his anointed; and so it suits excellently with what follows: And he shall reign for ever and ever. He has now come to the government, and shall continue to exercise it for ever. The time of the world's

supremacy, of the oppression of the church, has at length come to a final end.—The kingdom has *become*. The result is first actually attained in ver. 19. But since the angel has already sounded, and it is fixed, that the world's catastrophe follows immediately on the trumpet, the consequence is anticipated. Such a rejoicing in prospect of the immediately approaching victory presents itself also under the old covenant. Thus Ps. lxxv. is a song of triumph before the victory. Here, as there, the confidence with which the coming deliverance is anticipated, rests upon the divine promise. It was guaranteed to the church by the oath of the strong angel in ch. x. 6, 7, that under the trumpet of the seventh angel the mystery of God should be finished without delay, and the object of this was the dominion of the Lord and his anointed over the world.—The fact, which is here celebrated, has its proper root in the redemption accomplished by Christ—comp. xii. 10; but here for the first time does the necessary consequence of that work come fully into reality. To the thanksgiving of the saints for their heavenly felicity, in ch. vii. 10, corresponds here the expression of their joy on account of the final victory over the world. Bengel remarks: "As soon as the seventh angel sounds, the kingdom of the world becomes the Lord's and his Christ's, for ever. It is only in heaven, however, that this takes place so immediately, and in heaven alone is it celebrated with joy; for dreadful things still intervene on earth." But this view is only a result of the embarrassment in which they are involved, who, instead of perceiving that the seventh trumpet is comprised in ch. xi. 15—19, bring within its compass all that follows to the end of the book. The scene cannot, from the very nature of things, belong to heaven; and it makes nothing for this, that it is spoken of heaven. Decisive against such a view, is ch. x. 6, 7, according to which the sound of the seventh trumpet and the finishing of God's mystery, which can find its completion nowhere but on earth, for it concerns the dominion of Christ over the earth, are immediately united together. Ver. 19 also decides against it, if only it is rightly interpreted. But with perfect truth Bengel remarks on the expression: it has become, "Everything, and consequently also the kingdom of the world, is God's at all times. But in things visible and invisible, Satan and the world have set up their kings

and lords against the Lord and his anointed. Such an impious rebellion is brought to an end by God, and he maintains his right.—That royal word of the suffering Jesus, 'My kingdom is not of this world,' has been greatly abused. His kingdom is not worldly, but the kingdom of the world is holy and Christian. This province, which has been long enough in the enemy's hands, has at last been finally recovered; it is possessed by the Lord and his anointed." The kingdom of the world is *the Lord's and his anointed's*—the Son's, into whose hands all things have been committed by the Father, John iii. 35, and in particular all judgment, John v. 22. There is the same connection here between the Lord and his anointed, as in Acts iv. 26, in both places from Ps. ii. 2, "The kings of the earth rise up, and the princes sit in counsel against the Lord and his anointed." The conflict depicted there finds here at last an end. From the allusion to that fundamental passage it is clear, that *anointed* here is equivalent to *king*. The anointing, as was remarked in my commentary on the second Psalm, whether viewed as a real symbolical action, or spoken of in a merely figurative manner, is constantly regarded in the Old Testament as denoting the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as they were imparted to all the servants of God in his kingdom, which is characteristically distinguished from the kingdoms of this world by the very possession of these gifts. This signification comes very plainly out in the account given of the anointing of Saul, 1 Sam. x. 1, and of David, xvi. 13, 14. Kings were called by way of distinction the anointed, because they received a singularly rich supply of divine grace for their important office. The expression was on this account peculiarly appropriated to the king; he was the individual in whom the idea of the kingdom must be fully realized.[1]

The future dominion of the Lord over the world, resting on the solid foundation, that he is still Lord in the midst of the world's revolt (Ps. xxii. 28, xxiv. 1), was predicted in a long series of passages of Old Testament Scripture. It was the strong con-

[1] Bengel: "Elisha the prophet was anointed, 1 Kings xix. 16; priests were anointed, Ex. xxviii. 41; but most of all *kings;* and therefore the term *anointed,* when used absolutely, denotes only the king. He was wont to be called the Lord's anointed, not the anointed king. In the whole gospel history the name of Christ is never explained by the word priest, but very often by the name of king. And so, as often as Messiah is spoken of in Scripture, respect is had to his kingdom."

solation which bore up the church of the Lord for many centuries, during which the world made her afraid. The most exact agreement is with Obadiah, ver. 21, "And the kingdom shall be the Lord's." Comp. Zech. xiv. 9, "And the Lord will be king over the whole earth," Dan. ii. 44. The world-supremacy of Christ, beside that of the Lord, is announced in Dan. vii. 13, 14, as well as in Ps. ii., "And behold there came one with the clouds of heaven like a Son of man, and came to the Ancient of days, and he was brought before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, and all peoples, nations, and tongues, serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which does not pass away, and his kingdom has no end." Comp. ver. 18, 27, where the dominion of the Lord and of his anointed appears at the same time as the dominion of the people of the saints of the Most High, precisely as in the passage before us.—*Our* Lord, so the saints say with tender affection, instead of simply, the Lord, as used in the original passage; indicating also, that with his dominion theirs was inseparably connected; for the glory of the Lord passes over also upon the servants, comp. at ch. ix. 7. Bengel would delete the *our*, on very slender external authority, because he does not perceive its true import. A glance at ver. 18 shews, that it was necessary here. What the elders there fully express must here be indicated, at least, in the utterance of the saints. It is a mournful retrogression to seek, as many now do, to have states emancipated from the dominion of Christ. If they are severed from the end, which they are bound perpetually to promote, there will only be substituted for the dominion of *grace*, the dominion of *judgment*. But those who contend for a Christian state in opposition to wanton despisers, have here a rich consolation, and may quietly laugh at the world, while it deems their cause to be lost. The more decided the unchristianity of a state, the nearer is its absolute Christianity.

Ver. 16. *And the four and twenty elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell upon their faces and worshipped God.* Ver. 17. *Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and wast; because thou hast taken thy great power and dost reign.* Ver. 18. *And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead to be judged, and to give reward to thy servants, the prophets, and the saints,*

and to those that fear thy name, small and great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth. The four and twenty elders who sit before God on their thrones (they constantly sit there during the whole assembly of counsel and judgment that was held to decide upon the fates of the church and the world, ch. iv. 2), have respect to ch. iv. 4. Their worship to ch. iv. 10. There they adore and praise him, who prepares himself to judge the world. Here they celebrate the judgment as executed, the final victory over the world. According to ch. v. 10, they are the representatives of those, who shall reign upon the earth. In the assumption of dominion over the world by the Lord and his anointed, this dignity has now come to be fully enjoyed, and consequently it calls forth their thanksgivings. Bengel: "What the voices in heaven generally have spoken, is now more circumstantially unfolded in the thanksgiving of the elders. At other times they sit before the throne of God, but here they fall down, and that, not only upon their knees, but even upon their faces, and give to God the most profound worship. This worship consists in the fullest thanksgiving. Often as the elders are mentioned, they are never represented, as here, to have fallen prostrate on their faces. The greater the revelation is of divine grace and glory, the deeper always is the humiliation of the creatures, especially of those, who are the nearest to him."—In ver. 17, the address is directed to God in the unity of his being, without respect to difference of persons—comp. on ch. i. 8. There should be a point after God; "the Almighty" unfolds what is contained in "God;" the, "who is and was," explains the import of "Lord," equal to Jehovah—comp. on ch. i. 8. There it is said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God who is, and who was, and who comes, the Almighty." The designations of God here agree exactly with those there; excepting that "who comes" is awanting. The designations there serve to carry up the declaration that God will preserve his supremacy as at the beginning, so also at the end, to its necessity in the divine nature. Here, in view of the perfect keeping of the assurance there given, they point to the source, out of which it flows. The same designations of God occur also in ch. iv. 8. The clause added by Luther: and is to come, is to be deleted. It is one of the most important deviations in the translation of

Luther from the correct text of the Revelation. Externally, it has a very meagre support; the best authorities all speak for its omission; it has originated with those who thought they must supply from ch. i. 4, 5, iv. 8; and so thought, because they did not perceive that the subject has here reached another stage than at those parallel passages. Here the discourse can no longer be of a coming of the Lord, because he has already come. Bengel: "When it is said, We thank thee that thou hast taken thy great power, it is as much as to say, We thank thee that thou hast come. And when the wrath of God has come, as the elders say, in ver. 18, then God himself has also come." The ungenuineness of the words: and art to come, is clear also from this, that the simple "thou art and wast," in ch. xvi. 5, the only passage where it occurs besides this, can only be explained if it has been preceded by ours—see on the passage. The elders not merely praise the Lord, they give him thanks, because they are partakers of the great power which God takes, and of the dominion which he enters on. The power is the means by which the kingdom has been won. And great must be the power which can subdue an ungodly world, Eph. vi. 12. The *taking* forms the contrast to the leaving alone. He always possessed the power, but hitherto he had not exercised it. To *reign* is here, as much as to enter on the government. This is shewn here, and in ch. xix. 6, by the tense; properly: thou hast reigned, thou hast entered on the government. The original passage for the words, "Thou hast taken thy great power and reignest," is Ps. xciii. 1, "The Lord reigns, he is clothed with majesty, the Lord clothes and girds himself about with power." The world-power there threatens to shake the earth, and with it the kingdom of God. But the Psalmist sets against its revolt the Lord, whom he sees coming in his kingdom, clothed with majesty, and girt about with power. It was remarked there in my commentary that the expression: the Lord reigns, "alludes to the form used at the proclamation of earthly kings"—comp. 2 Sam. xv 10; 1 Kings i. 11, 13; 2 Kings ix. 13. This allusion itself shews that it is not the existing government of the Lord which is here spoken of, but a new and glorious revelation of his supremacy, as it were a new ascension of the throne. We are led to the same result also by the parallel passages, Ps. xcvi. 10, xcvii. 1, xcix. 1, where

the same form of expression occurs. In all of them it is the coming of the Lord in his kingdom that is referred to. In the face of the high-sounding pretensions of the world-power, asserting its dominion over the earth, that it has now gained the ascendancy over the kingdom of God; in the face of the proclamation: Assyria or Babylon reigns, the Psalmist exclaims: The Lord reigns; he announces that the dominion of the Lord, far from being destroyed by such feeble assaults, is now going to manifest itself in its full glory." What faith had there anticipated, that is now without delay to be brought to its full realization. The verbal allusion to the Psalms implies, that what the church now has immediately in prospect is the same that had long ago been prophesied; the hopes and expectations of the fathers were now to be gloriously realized. Along with the passages referred to in the Psalms, the three first petitions in the Lord's Prayer also, which, from their indications of the Lord's will, may likewise be regarded as prophecies, receive their complete fulfilment. (Vitringa: "This is that kingdom, whose coming Jesus Christ has taught us to expect and ask in prayer from God; it was then, indeed, begun, but now it reaches its consummation.") The Lord's taking his great power here, has its prefiguration in the overthrow of particular phases of the ungodly power, in a manifold series of provisional judgments on it; comp. ch. xix. 6, where the "Hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns," is uttered on the occasion of the overthrow of Rome. But these preliminary fulfilments point forward to the final one, to the time when not merely a particular phase of the ungodly power, but this power itself, lies stricken under the judgments of God.—In ver. 18, words are put into the mouth of the elders, which serve more definitely to characterize the seventh trumpet, in the proper description of which the prophet expresses himself with enigmatical brevity, to indicate, that a more lengthened delineation of the matter is to be given afterwards.[1] The wrath of the heathen is the time of provocation for the wrath of God. It pervades the whole of history, and then at the end of history it finds its full

1 Vitringa: "The things are spoken here indirectly, which would have been spoken directly and explicitly, if it had not been in the mind of the Spirit to disclose more fully in the subsequent parts of this prophecy the evils of the seventh trumpet."

recompense, after many a prelude of the final issue has been given during the course of God's providential dealings. The wrath of the heathen is called forth by the advancement of the hated kingdom of God and Christ, as it began to take place after the Word was made flesh. Such wrath, says Bengel, "continues still to shew itself. When God with his kingdom, when Christ with his truth, comes near to men, the hatred breaks forth against the light. And it will yet gather still more wind, and burst forth into a violent flame." In consequence of this wrath of the heathen, rooted in the wrath of Satan (comp. ch. xii. 17), they have shed the blood of saints and prophets; comp. ch. xvi. 6, xviii. 24. The chief phases of the wrath of the heathen are, according to the subsequent visions, the wrath of Rome, of the ten kings, of Gog and Magog, ch. xx. 7—9.[1] The wrath of God is come, because it is already as good as present; it breaks forth immediately in ver. 19, comp. ch. vi. 16, 17, where the expression is employed with equal prominence. Till now, the wrath of God has been the coming, or the future—comp. Matth. iii. 7, 1 Thess. i. 10.—*The time of the dead to be judged,* is as much as the time when the dead shall be judged. That the subject of discourse here is the final judgment on the dead previously raised to life again (in opposition to Vitringa, who understands by the judgment on the dead, God's espousing the cause of the dead martyrs, and bringing them into honourable remembrance), is manifest especially from ch. xx. 12, 13, where what is here indicated finds its fuller expansion: there the dead stand before the throne, the books are opened, and the dead are judged according to what is written in the books, according to their works—comp. John v. 28, 29, "The hour cometh, in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." In ch. xx. 12, 13, the

1 The allusion is to Ps. xcix. 1, "The Lord reigns, the peoples tremble." The words there have a twofold import. רגז signifies, not merely to tremble, but also to be angry, comp. Ps. iv. 4, and this signification stands here in the back-ground This was perceived by the LXX., who translate: Ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν, ὀργιζέσθωσαν λαοί, the Lord has entered on his kingdom, let the peoples be angry. Quite similar is the ποιμανεῖ in ch. ii. 27. There too a concealed back-ground is brought into view. That allusion is made to the passage in the Psalm here can the less be doubted, as ἐβασίλευσας immediately preceded. Besides, also, Ps. ii. treats of the wrath of God and the wrath of the heathen.

dead that are judged, are only the bad. The books are only the records of guilt. The book of life is opened merely to shew, that they are not written in it. They are all condemned to the second death. Accordingly, we must here also understand by the judgment the judgment of condemnation, that which is the product of the wrath of God, in harmony with the resurrection of judgment in John v. 29, and John v. 24, "Verily, verily I say to you, whosoever hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, he has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but is passed from death to life"—comp. John iii. 17, where to be judged forms the contrast to be saved, Rev. xviii. 8, xix. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 6; 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32. Otherwise it might be supposed, that by the time of the dead to be judged was meant the general judgment, and that in what follows the dead would fall into their two divisions. But in opposition to this, it is not said: those who have corrupted, but those who corrupt the earth. Besides the dead the living also are judged. But it was unnecessary to make mention of them expressly, because it was to be understood of itself, that when the *dead* sinners were judged, the living also should be so; whereas during the six preceding trumpets only the living were judged, and not the dead. Still, the living are not mentioned, even at the close of the verse.

The Lord himself has spoken of the reward to be given to his own, Matth. v. 12, 46, x. 41, 42. We have not here the two things existing alongside of each other, the wrath, judgment, destruction—and the distribution of reward; but the execution of judgment brings redemption along with it. If this is not perceived, the clause: and to destroy, trails in an unseemly manner. The reward of the faithful consists in this, that the earth has been cleared of its persecutors and oppressors, and now the meek possess it, Matth. v. 5. In regard to the persons who receive the reward, Bengel remarks, "There are three kinds of servants of God. There are the prophets, who have brought the will of God to men, and for the most part suffered death. There are the saints, who have given themselves wholly up to obey the will of God, although they may not have been called to deliver any particular oral testimony. These two kinds pre-eminently bear the honourable name of the servants of God. But there are also those who fear his name, small and great.

These are the inferior common class of such as receive a reward from God, and escape destruction. For one who is absolutely godless never properly fears God, Luke xxiii. 40." But the right view is rather that here two general and comprehensive designations are put, servants of the Lord and those who fear his name, and that each of the two classes comprises two subdivisions under it—the first, prophets and saints; the second, in reverse order, the small and the great. The servants of the Lord here are not the prophets and saints; comp. ch. xix. 5, where to the servants of God correspond those who fear him: Praise our God all his servants and those who fear him, the small and the great. Believers generally are also called God's servants in ch. ii. 20, vii. 3, xxii. 3, see on the title at ch. i. 1. By the prophets here the teachers, who also in Daniel have attained to a dignity of their own, ch. xii. 3, are represented as by their head; much as in ch. xi. 3 the whole work of witness-bearing is represented by that of prophecying. There is no reason for supposing that the prophets are here to be understood in the larger sense; they represent here, as also in ch. xi., the species, as being the most distinguished part. The *saints* never mean peculiarly destinguished Christians. By the name of saints all Israelites were designated in the Old Testament, the whole people of the covenant as the set apart, the chosen, those whom God had taken out of the territory of the profane world, behind whose glitter and display, misery and deep degradation ever lie concealed, and had elevated into the condition of his people—see my Commentary on Ps. xvi. 2. And so in the New Testament, and especially in the Apocalypse, it is a common designation of all Christians—comp. xiii. 7, 10, xiv. 12, xvii. 6, xviii. 20, xx. 9. The saints, as distinguished from the prophets here, are the other holy persons, for prophets also were such; as we read of Judah and (the rest of) Israel, Jerusalem and (the rest of) Judah, in ch. ix. 3, the men who bore the seal of God on their foreheads, and the grass and trees of the earth, meaning by these the rest of men. By *those that fear the Lord* was very commonly denoted in the Old Testament the entire multitude of believers—comp. for example Ps. cxii. 1, xxii. 23, where those that fear God form the parallelism to the seed of Jacob. Here it is not said simply, fear *thee*, but fear *thy name*. The name of God is the product of his doings. That he has

a name distinguishes the God of Revelation from an anonymous deity, such as Deism and Rationalism would set up for God. By the small and the great only such distinctions can be denoted as are similar to prophets and other saints, distinctions existing within the same territory, hence not such as are formed by riches, worldly position, or relative age. The *small* occurs thus in Matt. x. 42, xviii. 6, 10, 14; comp. Luke ix. 46, where the disciples contended among themselves who among them should be the greater, in regard to the place they might occupy in the kingdom of God. The *saints* and the *small* are to be regarded as emphatic. The design of giving so extended a description is to meet the misgivings of those, who can scarcely venture to appropriate to themselves any share in the reward, because they feel themselves so little and weak and wretched.—That we have understood correctly who are meant by the receivers of the reward, is clear from the fundamental and parallel passages. In Ps. cxv. 10, 11, we find set over against the house of Aaron, "and (all the rest) who fear the Lord." In ver. 12, 13, of the same Psalm it is said, "He shall bless the house of Israel, bless the house of Aaron. He shall bless those that fear the Lord, the small and the great." By the great there the priests more especially are understood, though including along with them all who occupy a prominent place in the kingdom of God, as here also the great is not to be absolutely confined to the prophets—comp. chap. xiii. 16, xix. 18, xx. 12, from which it is clear, that the distinction is of a wider compass. In Ps. cxviii. 2—4 we find Israel, the house of Aaron, those who fear the Lord—the latter the connecting link between the house of Aaron and (the rest of) Israel. To the distinction of saints and prophets here corresponds in Matt. x. 4, the distinction of prophets and (the rest of) the righteous. Finally, in Rev. xviii. 20, two divisions are made—saints, and apostles and prophets. The reward of the saints consists in this, that their persecutors are brought to destruction. So that the "and to destroy," &c., comes in quite naturally. Allusion is made to Gen. vi. 11—13, "And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was full of violence. And God saw the earth and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth

is full of violence by them, and behold I corrupt (destroy) them with the earth." As the sins of ancient times had revived, so also must their punishment. *Those who destroy (corrupt) the earth*, not at all mainly by idolatry, but, according to the original passage and ch. xix. 2, mainly by violence, and in particular by persecuting the church—comp. the (heathen) nations were angry, with which the verse begins. As the reward is distributed to the great and the small, so the judgment also falls upon all the destroyers without distinction, the deceivers and the deceived, the ringleaders in mischief, and their instruments. Bengel: "If those who have destroyed the earth, are destroyed, it is then good for the earth, and on account of it thanks are here rendered by those who are now to bear sway on the earth."

Ver. 19. *And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of his testimony was seen in his temple; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and a great hail.* By ναός here is denoted the whole heavenly temple (comp. iii. 12, vii. 15), in the narrower sense, as consisting of the sanctuary and the Most Holy Place. But the temple is only then opened fully when the veil is quite removed, which separated the sanctuary from the Holiest, in which the ark stood. This ark had a double name. It is called the *ark of testimony*, as containing the law which testified against sin—comp. Ex. xxv. 16, 22, xxvi. 33. But this designation is quite a partial one; it needs the other, the *ark of the covenant* (Deut. x. 8, xxxi. 9, 25, 26; Josh. iii. 6, iv. 9) for its complement. The ark also had belonging to it as an integral part, the *capporeth*, the symbol of atonement, on which the covenant was founded; see my Beitr. III. p. 641, ss.: "The indispensable condition of God's connection with men, the foundation of his dwelling among them, is the atoning divine compassion. This was symbolized by the capporeth. As externally the capporeth covered the ark with its testimony, so spiritually did the divine compassion the sins of the people." The choice between these two designations is usually to be determined by the respect under which the sacred ark is brought into view. It is called the ark of the covenant, when its property as a symbol and pledge of the covenant is made account of. So, for example, in the narrative of the wonderful passage through the Jordan in the book of Joshua, in which the ark of

the covenant formed a wall against the waters. So also in the siege of Jericho, Josh. vi. 6. Now here the ark cannot come into consideration in so far as it contained the tables of the law, as Hofmann has explained the reason of its appearance: "The law still retains its power, as well in regard to those who have sinned against it as to those who have fulfilled it. It may therefore be openly exhibited, after having been so long covered, while God was bearing with the wicked and not rewarding his servants." For, in that case, the ark would rather have been called the ark of testimony—comp. ch. xv. 5, "And afterwards I looked, and behold the temple of the tabernacle of testimony was opened in heaven," where a real value must be attached to the *testimony*, in which the world alone participates, for the *capporeth* avails only for the church. In the representation also of the judgment a point of essential moment would be wanting, the reference to the church, which still, according to ch. x. 7, must not be wanting. Finally, by this view too much is to be supplied. But when the ark of the covenant is made visible, the meaning can only be that the covenant receives its most signal accomplishment.[1] By the open exhibition of the ark it was intimated that the terrors which according to the following words were to burst upon the earth, had their foundation in the love of God—comp. the similar representation in ch. xiv. 15, 17. The thought is this, that God now, remembering his holy covenant, shall give to his people, that being redeemed from the hand of their enemies, they may serve God without fear, Luke i. 72—74. We must not determine the connection with what follows in some such way as this: there is a blessed reward to the righteous, though the words also represent the frightful punishment of the wicked; but the realization of the covenant, as is indicated by the appearance of the ark of the covenant, consists precisely in the overthrow of the enemies; as likewise in ver. 18, the distribution of reward to the servants consisted in the destroying of those who destroy the earth. The appearance of the ark of the covenant marks the judgment inflicted on the world to be an expression of the love of God to his church.—The *bright*

1 Bengel: "As a testimony, that what God had promised was now to be most perfectly fulfilled, both for the dismay and overthrow of the enemies, and for the support and joy of his own people."

appearance here forms the contrast to the *sad* appearance in ch. xii. 3.—According to some expositors mention is made of a heavenly temple in Ex. xxv. 9, 40, xxvi. 30, xxvii. 8; Numb. viii. 3. But the subject of discourse there is not of a heavenly temple and its furniture, the prototype of the earthly, but only that God called forth in the spirit of Moses the vision of the sanctuary, which formed the basis of the structure of the tabernacle. These passages, therefore, are not in point here. As little also does the Jewish fable of the concealment of the ark in a secret place before the Babylonish exile come into consideration (Ewald.) For, here the discourse is of the heavenly temple, the heavenly ark of the covenant.—Of the throne of God above the ark of the covenant, no account is made here. There is no reference to the representation given of God's appearance in ch. iv., and the question is out of place, how the ark of the covenant, over which was the throne of God, could here first appear visible, after what had preceded? God was not bound to the ark of the covenant. Even in Ezekiel, ch. x. 4, the glory of the Lord raised itself from the cherub to the threshold of the house; and in Ez. ch. i. the Lord appears to the prophet upon the cherubim out of the temple with its ark.—The five number: Lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquake, hail, is deserving of notice. It denotes, according to the uniform signification of the five in Scripture, and especially in the Apocalypse, as the signature of the half and incomplete, the unfinished character of the representation, and points to the supplement, which it is to receive in the later groups. The same signification belongs to the number five (which is here as little accidental as that of the three in ch. iv. 5, or of the four, as the signature of the earth, which the threatening respected, in ch. viii. 5) in the passage ch. xvi. 18—21, in which there is simply an extension of the one before us.—The comparison between the passage before us and ch. viii. 5, "And there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake," is instructive. The lightnings, which there occupy the third place, are here placed at the head; and quite naturally. For there, where the voices, etc., have only a threatening character, where they merely foreshadow the future judgments, the thunder is at least as early in its production as the lightning; but here, on the contrary, where all concerns the judgment itself,

the thunder can only come into consideration as connected with the lightning, as rendering the scene of destruction more appalling. Hand in hand with this position of the lightning, goes the addition of the hail, which never possesses a merely threatening character, but always appears where judgment has actually entered; comp. ch. viii. 7. Also in ch. xvi. 18—21, where likewise the actual entrance of the judgment is represented, the lightnings form the beginning and the hail the conclusion.—The verse before us is related to ver. 15—18 much as in ch. xvi. 18, the report that there were voices, thunders, etc., to the anticipative declaration in ver. 17: It is done.—The earthquake marks the shattering of the ungodly world-power—comp. on ch. vi. 12. Ch. xvi. 18—20 forms a commentary on it.[1] Hail appears often in the Old Testament as an image of divine judgment, comp. Isa. xxx. 30, xxxii. 19; Ps. xviii. 12, 13, "At the brightness before him his clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire! And the Lord thundered in the heavens, and the Most High gave forth his voice, hailstones and coals of fire." There too we have a scene of actual destruction. The storm of divine wrath discharges itself. Amid frightful thunder and the sea of fire, by which the Lord in his anger was encompassed, lightnings burst forth, rending the cloud, and hailstones pour down—the weapons with which the Lord assails his own and his people's enemies; as of old the Egyptians (Ex. ix. 24, comp. Ps. lxxviii. 47, 48), and the Canaanites at Bethoron (Jos. x. 11.) The repetition there in ver. 13, serves the same design as is done here by the lightning being made to open and the hail to close the series. The repetition, as remarked in my Commentary, is the more in its place as the fiery coals, or lightnings, and the hailstones, were properly the things by which the enemies of the Psalmist were destroyed; the rest were mere accompaniments by which the scene of destruction was rendered more dreadful.—We have here no limitation of the territory, as in the first six trumpets, and even in the great earthquake, which befals Jerusalem

1 The καὶ σεισμός, which is omitted in some critical helps, cannot be dispensed with were it only on account of the relation to ch. viii. 5. Then also the relation to ch. xvi. 18—20 requires it. The reason for the omission may be gathered from the remark of Züllig: "Others have still earthquake, but this would destroy the round number corresponding to the four quarters of the world."

in the episode in ch. xi. 13; which is a clear proof that we have here to do with the final judgment.

THE THREE ENEMIES OF GOD'S KINGDOM, CH. XII.—XIV.

The Revelation of St John gives no regularly progressive disclosure of the future, advancing in unbroken series from beginning to end; but it falls into a number of groups, which indeed supplement each other, every successive vision giving some other aspect of the future, but which are still formally complete in themselves, each proceeding from a beginning to an end.

There can be no doubt that at ch. xii. we have the commencement of a new group, and the remark of Bengel, "Those are in a great prophetical error who break off here, and if nowhere else, yet here at least make an entirely new beginning," is quite wrong, and ought to be precisely reversed. For at the close of ch. xi. we are manifestly brought to the last end; so that the Seer, if he will not altogether conclude his book, must commence anew. For what could it be but a description of the last end, which has for its object the development of the kingdom of God, when it is said, in ch. xi. 15, in anticipation of what was immediately to follow, "The kingdom of the world has become (the kingdom) of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever?" When the four and twenty elders, the ideal representatives of the church in heaven, say in prospect of what is presently to be done, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God the Almighty, who art and wast, that thou hast taken thy great power and reignest?" When the "and art to come," which before the last end has so deep a meaning, and was spoken with so strong an emphasis, appears now as antiquated, and there is only a past and present in the kingdom of God? When the elders say further, in ver. 18, "Thy wrath is come, and the time to judge the dead, and to reward thy servants, the prophets and the saints, and those that fear thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth?" Such, surely, have the time of the last judgment, and the consummation of grace immediately in prospect. What we now, according to ch. xi. 15—18, expect—the appearance of the Lord, the final victory of God's kingdom, the resurrection of

the dead, the last judgment, the glorification of the church—all this is represented in ver. 19 as having entered, but only by way of gentle indication, which few have understood. For, the Seer would reserve the more particular delineation of these last things for a later part of his book, and precisely by the enigmatical brevity with which he here treats them, would set expectation on the stretch regarding that more particular delineation in reserve. "And the temple of God (it is said) was opened in heaven, and the ark of his Testament was seen in his temple; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and a great hail." The temple in heaven is a symbol of the church, the ark of the covenant a symbol of the gracious relationship in which the Lord stands to his church; that it has become visible, imports that this relation is now in a glorious manner maintained, and becomes manifest to view. All that the Lord does toward the realization of this, and in suspending judgment over the church's enemies, is here concealed under the lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and earthquake, and great hail—exactly as in ch. viii. 1 by the silence, where the closing scene appears under the same kind of veil. So the end of the vision reverts to the beginning, as a certain proof that we have here a termination before us. What is said in ch. viii. 5, "And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from off the altar, and threw it upon the earth; and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake," is a prophecy, which we here see brought to fulfilment.

[By the view now given, the foundation is withdrawn from the hypothesis of Bleek (in the Berlin Theol. Zeitsch. Th. II. p. 281), according to which the book originally consisted of ch. i. and ch. iv.—xi., and between ch. xi. and xii. something must have been taken away which originally formed the conclusion of the whole book, the representation of the Lord's second coming, and the setting up of his kingdom. It rests primarily on the groundless supposition, that the book in its original form must necessarily have contained a continuous, regularly progressive representation, whereas here we are met with a quite new beginning. "The artificial plan, by which the future gradually advanced and rose into view," is made to vanish at ch. viii. 2, where we have also a new beginning, not less than at ch. xii. 1. Bleek, indeed, labours

there to discover a connection. He says, "We have to consider the matter so, that what comes forth in the particular trumpet-voices, taken together, makes up the whole still remaining part of the contents of the book, inclosed in the seventh seal; so that we are here still in very close connection with the preceding context." But if we must be still within the compass of the seventh seal at the end of ch xi., it is very strange that no reference whatever is made to what goes before ch. viii. 1; the seven trumpets have entirely the appearance of an independent position, and never make any allusion to the seals. The silence in ch. viii. 1 is alone to be regarded as belonging to the seventh seal; and the idea, that the seven trumpets are to be drawn into the circle of the seven seals, was long ago very satisfactorily refuted by Vitringa. Among other things against it is the brevity of the description belonging to the other seals in proportion to this, which would then embrace the contents of four entire chapters; while, "the events of most of the other seals are declared in the short and simple delineation of a single figure or two." Farther, if the trumpets were subordinated to the seals, and contained the issues of the seventh seal, there would have been no need for a new preface or an introductory vision, by which John sought to prepare the way for the seven trumpets. For, the vision of the sacrificing angel, ch. viii. 3—6, is a sort of prelude, heralding the new scenes, that were soon to present themselves to John. If we have a quite new beginning even at ch. viii. 2, the view must be abandoned, which regards the Revelation as a regularly progressive and continuous whole, a view that has been most pernicious to the right exposition of the book; and it must not be regarded as at all strange, that at chap. xii. we are entirely cut off from the earlier series of representations, so that we should go about to construct groundless hypotheses, with Bleek, or with Bengel and Lücke, try to build a bridge out of our own materials. The attempt of the latter to bring the whole of what follows even to the end of the book within the compass of the last trumpet and of the last woe, is proved to be unavailing by the fact, that never after ch. xi. is a word said about a trumpet or a woe; secondly, by the first six trumpets and the two first woes having so limited a range; and lastly, by the circumstance that the immediately following por-

tion, ch. xii.—xiv., has not at all the character of a trumpet and a woe. Bleek urges further: "It has already been remarked, how the threefold repetition of the woe, ch. viii. 13, is intentional, since to each of the three still remaining last trumpet voices there belongs a woe; this is expressly noticed in connection with the fifth and sixth. But now in this third and last woe, for which preparation had been so carefully made in the preceding part, that we might certainly expect the same to be at least as solemnly and expressly uttered in regard to it, as in regard to the two first, it is not at all mentioned either here or anywhere in what follows." In the proclamation, however, at ch. xi. 14, "The second woe is past, behold the third woe comes quickly," the third woe *is* expressly announced, and is realized in ver. 19, where the great hail especially appears as the divine instrument of punishment and the symbol of the divine judgment—comp. xvi. 21. Any more explicit mention was unnecessary; because the boundary-line in respect to the second was so plainly drawn at ver. 14, and there was to be no fourth. It would even have been confusing; for there was not to be expected here any formal conclusion, but rather something to indicate the supplement still to be expected, the unfinished character of the issue. What Bleek still further urges in proof of the fragmentary character of ch. xi. in its present form—that we should have expected the personal appearance of the Lord at ver. 19, and the judgment therewith connected—has been already met by the remarks made in the text. It would only be of force, if ver. 19 formed the close of the whole book, and not merely of a single group. In the latter case, it is quite enough, exactly as at ch. viii. 1, simply to mark the place, which is to belong to what is to be unfolded afterwards more at length, and this here is sufficiently done, especially if we take into account, not merely ver. 19, but also what in ver. 15—18, is said in announcing what was immediately at hand. We shall then have no doubt remaining as to what really belongs to the seventh trumpet, and it will be clear, that we have here before us in the plan, what is brought out in detail in the last groups. —Besides, Ewald has already remarked with justice, that the mere hypothesis of Bleek, countenanced only by some appearances, is effectually disproved by ch. xi. 7 alone, according to which the beast, which rises out of the abyss, is to wage war on

the two witnesses, and overcome and kill them. By that we are pointed forwards to ch. xiii. Only an author could have written thus, who meant to give afterwards a more extended description of the beast, as, indeed, without the future explanation we should not know what to make of such a statement. (This passage also is decisive against the hypothesis of a regularly progressive representation in one and the same line; it implies, that the book consists of groups, which run parallel with each other. How, otherwise, could the beast, which is here spoken of as already being on the field, be represented in ch. xiii. as then only making its appearance?) It is not worth while to advance more arguments against the hypothesis in question—as that the seven seals and the seven trumpets, which keep very much to generals, and have the character of a prelude, cannot possibly make up one whole, etc.]

As certainly as at the end of ch. xi. we stand at the final close of things, so certainly do we find ourselves at the beginning of ch. xii. thrown back to the commencement of the New Testament economy; so that it is vain to speak of a continuous representation. The sufferings of the Lord's people first pass before the soul of the prophet, which were endured before the birth of Messiah; then follows the birth itself, then the ascension, and the description, how through the accomplished atonement of Christ the power of Satan has been broken. And though we should consider all this as an introduction, which is its real character, as shall presently be made to appear, yet it does not conduct us over the very first beginnings of the Christian church. The starting-point in that case is the present of the Seer, the time of the Roman persecution, and the tendency of the section appears to be, to direct those, who had to suffer under the persecution, to the grace of God, which was to preserve the church through all the coming troubles, ver. 6, 14, and at last bring the persecution to an end by the overthrow of the persecuting power.

Having thus determined the relation of this section to the preceding context, we shall farther endeavour to fix its relation to what follows. A new scene opens to us with the beginning of ch. xv. The section of ch. xii.—xiv., or the fourth group, is occupied by the three enemies of God's kingdom; the capital

enemy Satan, who, as such, to indicate his great power, appears in heaven, ch. xii. 1—17,—the beast, who arises out of the sea, the symbol of multitudes of people, the ungodly world-power, ch. xii. 18—13,—and the second beast out of the earth, the earthly, sensual, demoniacal wisdom, ch. xiii. 11—18. The fourteenth chapter consoles the faithful, who are to be tried and oppressed by these enemies, by pointing to the blessedness in heaven, which awaits them, ver. 1—5, and to the judgment, which is to be executed on the enemies at the close of all. But the representation given of this judgment is of a very general kind; the *detailed* account of the divine judgment on the three enemies is reserved for a separate group, the sixth, ch. xvii.—xx., which in a reverse order ascends from the beasts to Satan, and for which the fifth group, the vision of the vials in ch. xv., xvi., forms a sort of prelude.

According to the historical starting-point of the Revelation, as it is unfolded in ch. i. 9, which declares the book to have been written by John during the Roman persecution; and according to its designs as announced in ver. 1, to shew to the servants of Christ, what must shortly come to pass; farther, according to ver. 19, "Write what thou hast seen, and what is, and what shall be done hereafter," and according to ch. iv. 1, "Come up here, I will shew thee, what shall be done after these things," which shew that the *past* as such cannot be the proper object of the things here unfolded, we must regard what is said in ch. xii. 1—5, 7—12, only as introductory. What Christ has accomplished in the past comes here into consideration only in so far as it formed the basis of confidence and blessing to his oppressed people in their present troubles—comp. ver. 11, where this aim comes plainly out; where it is announced that the glorious victory of Christ, described in the preceding context, is only to be taken into account so far as it is the foundation of victory to Christ's people in the hard conflict which they have to maintain with the dragon. Ver. 6 and vers. 13—15 have respect to the present and the immediate future; vers. 16, 17, to the more remote future.

It is justly remarked by Hartwig in his Apologie der Apoc., II. p. 288, "that in this whole representation there are such unmistakeable allusions to the true history of the child Jesus and

his mother, and the tyranny of Herod, as related in the second chapter of Matthew, that this chapter receives from it a new confirmation."

Ver. 1. *And there appeared a great sign in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.* A *sign*, because John saw things not in their proper nature, but in figure and enigma; the church, for example, under the image of a woman, Satan under that of a dragon. So sign is used also in ch. xv. 1. This circumstance, that John always sees only signs, has been too little considered by expositors, who too frequently keep standing at the mere outward appearance, so that those who penetrate through the veil into the idea concealed behind it, are apt to be accused of a false spiritualism. The word *sign* is used otherwise in Matt. xxiv. 30. There, the sign of the Son of Man is his appearance itself, so unspeakably comforting in his nature, and yet so unspeakably frightful, as a prophecy in action of judgment and salvation—comp. the declaration connected with it, "And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn."—The sign, whose external display and glory points to the height of the matter indicated by it (a *great* sign, in ch. xv. 1: a sign great and wonderful), appears *in heaven.* Many expositors refer this to the circumstance that the church represented by the woman has its proper seat and the root of its existence in heaven. So Vitringa: "This sign was seen in heaven, partly because it refers to the religion, the object of which is in heaven, partly and especially because the subject of this vision, the church of the New Testament, has obtained its place with Jesus Christ in heaven, Eph. ii. 6." Bengel: "The woman herself, the church, had previously been in all conditions upon the earth, but on account of her nobility, which belongs to her from her connection with the Lord Jesus Christ, she is in heaven, Eph. ii. 6; Phil. iii. 20. Her pregnancy and the birth following thereupon is heavenly; in heaven she is assaulted and defended, vers. 4, 7." But the heaven is here rather the theatre, where every thing passed before the eye of the prophet, not excepting that which in reality belonged to the earth. What the Seer beholds does not belong to the sensuous but to the super-sensuous sphere. To be in the Spirit and to be in heaven is the same; comp. Ezek. i. 1, "The

heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God;" here ch. iv. 1, 2, where, as the realization of the call, "Come up hither (into heaven), I will shew thee what shall be after these things," it is stated, "And immediately I was in the Spirit." Then, ch. viii. 1.—The woman, between whom and that described in ch. xvii., as Bengel remarks, there is a mighty difference, is not the community of Israel in contradistinction to the Christian church; for what is said in ver. 6 and ver. 14—17, of the woman, can only be referred to the Christian church. Nor, on the other hand, does it denote the Christian church in contradistinction to the community of Israel; for the Christian church had not Christ born in it—an argument which the defenders of this view (Vitringa, Bengel, and others) escape from only by the violent supposition that it is not the first birth of Christ in Bethlehem that is here spoken of, but a mystical birth of Christ as the ruler of the heathen. But the woman, or Zion, which often appears in the Old Testament under the image of a woman, is properly the one indivisible community of the Old and New Covenant, the Israel perpetuated in the Christian church, out of which the false seed has been cast by its unbelief in the now manifested angel of the covenant, while the believing heathen have been received into it—comp. ch. vii. 4, ss. That the church here was seen in the type of the virgin Mary, or that the Seer perceived in the virgin Mary an image of the church, is rendered probable by ver. 4.—The woman appears as *clothed with the sun.* The sun is that of the visible heavens, for only this could be called simply *the* sun, and be put in opposition to the moon; but the sun signifies the glory of the Lord, and only as a symbol of this is it here brought into view. In Isa. lx. 1, this already appears under the image of a great light, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Of Christ it is said, in Matth. xvii. 2, when the veiled glory of the Lord broke forth on the mount of transfiguration, "And he was changed before them, and his countenance shone like the sun, and his raiment was white like the light." In this book itself, ch. i. 16, "his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." And of the New Jerusalem, the church in its state of exaltation, it is said, in ch. xxi. 23, "And the city needs not the sun nor the moon to give light to it, for the glory of the Lord illuminates it, and the Lamb is the light of it." To be shone upon and enlightened by the glory

of the Lord, belongs at all times to the very nature of the church; but this glory during the present course of things, as with Christ in his state of humiliation, is a veiled one; a dark cloud conceals it from our view; and he only who, like John, has a door opened for him in heaven, and a call addressed to him to go up thither, can behold it in cloudless splendour.—The woman has *the moon under her feet.* Created light is far beneath her glory, because she is irradiated by the uncreated, the glory of the Lord. Instead of the moon, the sun and moon would both have been named, if the sun had not already been taken as the symbol of divine glory. The thought is the same as in Isa. xxiv. 23, "And the moon is confounded, and the sun is ashamed; for the Lord of Hosts reigns upon mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his elders is glory." Sun and moon become pale before the glory of the Lord, their Creator and Lord, with which he irradiates his glorified church. What is said there, and in ch. lx. 19, "The sun shall no more be for light by day, and as brightness the moon shall not enlighten thee," can only be regarded as peculiarly belonging to the triumphant church, of which it is primarily said, in so far as in that church it is fully manifest in the appearance. Essentially it must belong to the church always. For in substance every thing is common to the militant and triumphant church.—On the head of the woman is a *crown of twelve stars.* These cannot denote the twelve apostles, whose names, according to ch. xxi. 14, are upon the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem; for the woman has the crown of twelve stars before the birth of her Son; but the twelve apostles are apostles of the Lamb. They are rather the twelve Israelitish patriarchs, as ideal representatives of the tribes; comp. ch. xxi. 12, according to which the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel are upon the gates of Jerusalem. According to this passage, and ch. vii. 4, ss., these twelve tribes continue to exist also in the church of the New Covenant; comp. Ezek. xlvii. 22, 23, according to which in the future development of the kingdom of God the stranger is to be on a footing of equality with the native Israelite: "And shall also have their part in the land, each one under the tribe wherein he dwells, saith the Lord." In the dream of Joseph, too, Gen. xxxvii. 9, where sun, moon, and stars occur with respect to the relations of Israel, and from which the figurative style of representation before us takes its rise, the stars denote the children

of Jacob. In other parts of the Revelation the elders correspond to the stars here. The difference in the number, here twelve, there twenty-four, is to be explained by the circumstance, that the representation of the church after the period that is here contemplated (for Zion is seen by the prophet as at the threshold of Messiah's birth), received an increase through the twelve apostles.

Ver. 2. *And she was with child and cried, and was in travailing-pangs, and in great pain to be delivered.* According to a whole series of passages of the Old Testament, the heavy troubles which preceded the appearance of the Saviour appear here under the image of severe pains falling upon Zion, the church of God. Comp. Mic. iv. 9, 10, "Pains have laid hold of thee (Zion) as a travailing woman. Shout and break forth, daughter of Zion;" Jer. iv. 31, "I hear a voice as of a woman in travail, anguish as of one bringing forth her first-born, the voice of the daughter of Zion; she bewails, she spreads forth her hands, Woe is me! for my soul is wearied through the murderers;" xxx. 6, xlix. 24; Isa. xxvi. 17; Hos. xiii. 13. The comparison of these passages furnishes a complete answer to those who understand by the woes here, with Bengel, "the anxious longing, the sighing, the prayers, the earnest expectation of the saints for the kingdom of God." This was not the sorrows, but the sorrows called it forth. It is an eternal law, by which God governs his church on earth, that pain precedes joy, misery salvation; after the example of Israel in Egypt, to whom redemption only came when the suffering reached its greatest height. Suffering must awaken longing after the salvation of God; it is necessary to beget cordial reception and thankfulness of spirit. We must receive what our deeds deserve, so that every feeling of our own worth and excellence, which might lead us to think ourselves entitled to salvation, may be destroyed; so that not merely with the lips, but with the whole heart we may sing, "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but to thy name be the praise." The greatness of the preceding suffering is determined by the greatness of the approaching deliverance. It must be experienced, and must also culminate before the first and second coming of the Lord; in respect to which last it is said in Matth. xxiv. 21, "There shall then be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world till now, nor ever shall be"—words, whose solemn import is better understood by us now than it was

some time ago, since the beginning of troubles has already entered, and the storm of divine wrath appears lowering in the heavens.—Whence the sorrows mentioned here come, what the instrument is which God employs to break the hardness of his people is shown in what follows. They come without doubt from that dragon who would devour the child. For he would devour the child only because he feared that it would deliver its mother from his dominion. The statement that his tail draws the third part of the stars and throws them upon the earth, ver. 4, points to the destroying agency of the dragon in earlier times—to that as the animating principle of the conquering world kingdoms. Then, the declaration in ver. 5, "who shall rule all the nations with a rod of iron," serves also to indicate the source of the troubles. It implies that before the birth of the child the church was subject to the dominion of the heathen.—From what has been remarked, the historical reference cannot be doubtful. The people of God before the manifestation of Christ were subject to the dominion of the Romans, and under their auspices to the cruel tyranny of Herod, well fitted to serve as a representation of the invisible tyrant, under whose direction, according to the view given in this book, the whole matter stood. In immediate connection with the birth of Christ, and the unmerited salvation which began to be prepared for the people of God, the deserved punishment of servitude to the world presented himself in a living form through Herod in the murder of the children at Bethlehem, which was designed to serve not only as a single specimen, but as an image and symptom of the whole state. The word: "In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not," holds not alone in regard to that one calamity; it represents to our view generally the image of Zion under the tyranny of the Romans, of Herod, of the dragon, and affords us a glance into our own future. How Zion then cried aloud, and was in travailing-pangs, in anguish to be delivered, is also vividly described in the song of Zecharias, in which the felt need for redemption joyfully hails the Redeemer, and exclaims, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people; and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hands of all who hate us; that

being delivered out of the hands of our enemies we might serve him without fear." Those who make all subservient in the Revelation to the discovery of a regularly progressive representation, and who cannot bear to think of a new beginning at this chapter, of a going back to the first origin of the Christian church, suppose that the church is here described in the state which belonged to it before the time of Constantine, when it was big with Christ as the ruler of the heathen, and experienced bitter pangs from the Roman persecutions, especially from the severest of them all, that of Diocletian. But every impartial mind must think primarily of the actual birth of Christ; and this is confirmed by the reference to the history of Christ's childhood in ver. 4, his ascension in ver. 5, and the atonement effected by him, ver. 7—9.

Ver. 3. *And there appeared another wonder in heaven, and behold! a great red dragon, that had seven heads and ten horns, and upon its head seven crowns.* Ver. 4. *And his tail draws the third part of the stars, and throws them upon the ground. And the dragon stood before the woman that was ready to be delivered, in order to devour the child as soon as she had brought forth.* Vitringa: "Nothing is omitted that might set forth the greatness and severity of the woman's conflict in the most lively colours. She was in the greatest labour, seized with the most violent pangs of child-birth, and in this state appears to be supported only by the hope of the male offspring, which she had so much desired; but she sees a frightful dragon, ready to devour her child whenever it might be born." Bengel remarks: "The proper theme of this book begins at ch. iv., where heaven is laid open to our view as a sacred theatre of operations. During the first eight chapters no description is given of Satan. But since he is introduced here as the chief enemy of the kingdom of God and Christ, he is the more frequently again brought upon the field, until he at last appears as cast into the lake of fire." The single circumstance of the author having till now been so sparing in his allusions to Satan, shows the careful construction of the plan of the book; and at the same time shows, that it does not by a regular and uninterrupted progress anticipate history. For, in that case, silence could not have been maintained so long respecting Satan. The two first groups, the seals and the trumpets, possess more of a

general, introductory character, that of a prelude. Prophecy and history respecting God's kingdom only come upon the main point, when the conflict between Christ and Satan is brought into view. —The dragon[1] appears often as the king of the sea, and sovereign of the marine animals—see Ps. lxxiv. 13, 14, and my Commentary there. In the spiritual seal of the world he is therefore the natural image of conquering and reigning power—comp. Isa. xxvii. 1, where it is said in reference to the king of Babylon, "At that day will the Lord visit with his sword, the hard, the great, and the strong, the Leviathan, the flying serpent, and the Leviathan, the wounded serpent, and he kills the dragon that is in the sea;" also Jer. li. 34 of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, "He has swallowed us up like a dragon;" Ez. xxix. 3, 4, where the great dragon (to which the *great dragon* here specially alludes) appears as an emblem of Pharaoh the king of Egypt. Hence the great dragon must represent the prince of this world[2] in his most powerful agency, having earthly princes merely as his servants and instruments of working.—Satan appears as a great *red* dragon. This colour belongs to him as the murderer of men from the beginning (John viii. 44, comp. 1 John iii. 12), as the ultimate author of all the plundering ambition and the blood-shedding that discovers itself in the earth; especially as the ultimate author of all the world's fury against the church, which was typified by the murder of Abel through Cain, the instrument of Satan.[3]—The seven heads and the ten horns of the dragon

1 The LXX. render by δράκων the תנין of Ex. vii. 9, Jer. ix. 11, the לויתן of Isa. xxvii. 1, and elsewhere. That by the dragon here a sea-beast is denoted, is evident from a comparison of the passages referred to in the text from the Old Testament. These are to be taken more into account than what has been said by heathen antiquity of the dragon—see Vitringa.

2 This appellation, peculiar to the evangelist John, xii. 31, xiv. 30, xvi. 11, differs from the great dragon here, precisely as John's Gospel differs from the Revelation. In both alike Satan is represented as the spiritual background of the ungodly world. What Lücke says in regard to the prince of this world, "the head of the refractory powers and influences in the world, that are opposed to the kingdom of God, as well among the Jews as heathens," applies equally to the dragon.

3 That πυρρός here denotes the bloody character, is plain from ch. vi. 4, where beyond all question it occurs as a mark of the blood colour, as also from Zech. vi. 2, comp. 2 Kings iii. 22, LXX., Τὰ ὕδατα πυρρὰ ὡς αἷμα, and the δάμαλις πυρρά, whose colour points to blood; see my Egypt and the Books of Moses, p. 181, ss. Here, too, ch. xvii. 3 is parallel, as there the woman appears sitting on a purple-coloured beast (the blood-thirsty world power, whose animating principle is Satan.) But it is not necessary on this account to give πυρρός, which properly means blonde, fawn, the signification of

denote the seven phases of the hostile world-power—the seventh a divided one, as indicated by the ten horns on the seventh head. Satan bears this emblem as a reflection of his visible representative and image upon earth. That Satan comes into consideration here as the moving principle of the conquering power and dominion of this world, as opposed to the kingdom of God, through which he executes his wicked designs, is clear alone from this, that to him the Old Testament representation commits the earthly world-power —the dragon—with which also agrees the application to him of the emblem that occurs in the subsequent context; and it also appears from what immediately follows. Other reasons will be given in the treatise on the Beast of the Apocalypse.—The dragon's tail draws the third part of the stars and throws them on the earth. This trait does not immediately belong to the matter at present in hand. The subject of discourse here is not what the dragon begins to do against the kingdom of God. "There is a wide difference," as Bengel remarks, "between his beginning against the mother, and his deceiving the nations on the earth;" yet still, we add, they have both the same root—the spirit of revolt against God, an impious resistance to his holy arrangements, as wishing to be God upon earth. In the Old Testament also what the conquering world-power generally committed, is very commonly united with that, which is specially attempted against the church. It is so, for example, in Habakkuk. According to the symbolical language of the Revelation stars are rulers; their being cast down upon the earth denotes their being conquered and overthrown—comp. the original passage in Dan. viii. 10, where the throwing of the stars upon the earth occurs of an earthly conqueror, and the remarks on this passage in the treatise on the Beast of the Apocalypse. In what is said in Daniel, "And it (the horn) was great even to the host of heaven, and threw down to the earth of the host and of the stars, and trod upon them; and it lifted itself up to the prince of the host," &c., there is the same transition as here. For the intention of devouring the child, as expressed in what

blood-red. With the serpents as well as the horses, the colour might appropriately be chosen, which comes nearest to that of blood, and reminds one of it. Fawn is the prevailing colour of the greater part of serpents, for example, the boa, and also quite agrees with the colour of the crocodile.

immediately follows, is in like manner a direct act of impiety toward God.[1] The third part, according to the usage of this book, denotes a great multitude. The dragon places himself before the woman, that was going to bring forth, in order to devour her child. The same wickedness had been practised by him in ancient times. The life of Moses, on whom the hopes of the people of God hung during the fearful oppression exercised over them by the enemy, was brought into extreme peril by him at the very first. At the coming of Christ, whose appearance threatened far greater danger to his dominion upon earth, who was to withdraw from him, not only the people of God, but the heathen also, whom he had hitherto regarded as his proper subjects, who should rule these with a rod of iron, and therefore should attack him in his own territory, he sets his instruments anew in motion, as is reported in Matt. ii. 1—12, to which allusion is here manifestly made. Herod, the servant of the dragon, as soon as he heard of the birth of Jesus, takes measures to have the new-born child despatched, and kills all the children in Bethlehem under two years old, that he might make sure of destroying the one hated child. He has been manifesting the same wickedness also since, throughout the whole history of the Christian church, as often as Christ is born anew in the Spirit. He is always at hand to strangle, if he can, the nascent life. What he then did through Herod is, because history, also symbol—a prophecy in action. With Bengel and other expositors, to put here one of those later imitations in the room of the great original, is quite arbitrary.

Ver. 5. *And she brought forth a son, a male, who was to tend all the nations with a rod of iron. And her child was snatched up to God and his throne.* The appended *male*, serves the purpose of giving peculiar prominence to the sex, and stands in connection with the following declaration: who was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.[2] Allusion, it would seem, is made

1 The exposition, "The stars are the Christians and teachers, the third part of whom the dragon draws from their divine object of faith, attaches to himself, and brings down to the natural earthly state," is both against the original passages and the connexion. It cannot possibly be spoken of Christians before Christ. But by what immediately follows Christ was not yet born. Satan stands ready to devour him as soon as he might be born. The uniform usage of the Revelation also is against it, by which stars denote rulers.

2 There is much haste in the remark of Züllig, "According to Jer. xx. 15, it is a pure

to Isa. lxvi. 7, where it is said of Zion, "Before she cried, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child." The man-child there is not a single person, but it denotes the manly, vigorous aftergrowth, or fresh growth of the people of God. But by the allusion to that passage it is indicated here, that only in and by that manly son Christ, that other *ideal* manly son could be produced; that what with the prophet was primarily a mere personification, found in the real person of Christ its profound truth. The word: who was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, which we find brought to its accomplishment at chap. xix. 15, carries a dreadful threatening to the heathen. But behind the destruction threatened, salvation is concealed, behind the judgment grace. It is a blessing for the heathen if through the iron rod their rebellion against God becomes broken, their enmity against his church, their entire heathenish existence. If they themselves knew what makes for their peace, they would beg to be smitten by the rod of iron. Only the dragon receives hurt in the matter. Allusion is made to Ps. ii. 9, where the Lord says to his anointed Christ, "Thou wilt bruise them (the heathen) in pieces with a rod of iron." Instead of bruising, the Seer, after the LXX., has *tending*. Not by a sort of misunderstanding or arbitrarily. In the original passage itself allusion is made to the pasturing or tending; the word which signifies: Thou wilt bruise, differs not in its consonants, but only in its pronunciation, from that which means: Thou wilt tend. By this significant allusion it is indicated that the proper office of the anointed is to tend (Ps. lxxviii. 71, 72), but that upon their sinful quid pro quo, refractoriness instead of joyful obedience, a righteous quid pro quo follows on the part of the anointed. The double import of the expression could not be rendered in Greek; only one of the sides could be exhibited, and the *tending*, used with a kind of irony, has substantially much the same force as the original.—Before the words: and her child was caught up, is to be supplied: and the dragon continued his

Hebraism without any intentional emphasis." "Cursed," says Jeremiah, "be the man who brought to my father the report: a son is born to thee, a male; that he might make him glad." The זכר added to בן is employed to make the contrast more emphatic between the birth of a son and that of a daughter, as being more joyful: *q. d.* a son, and not a daughter. It is a similar kind of emphasis that is used here.

persecution, as was done according to the evangelical history from the temptation onwards to the death on the cross—comp. Luke iv. 13, where especially the ἄχρι καιροῦ, for a season, is to be kept in view, and John xiv. 30, where the Lord says in the immediate prospect of his sufferings, "The prince of this world cometh," = the dragon. The supplying of this becomes quite natural from what is said in ver. 4; for, how should he, who before the birth of the child stood ready to devour him, have at once ceased from his persecution, the moment the child was born? and it is demanded by the expression: he was snatched up. For, this presupposes the danger of the child. It is expressive of the haste, with which one snatches away a precious and loved treasure, and places it in security, when it has come to be in jeopardy. The fundamental passage in Isa. liii. 8, where it is said of Christ, "From oppression and judgment was he taken away." As the expression: it was snatched up, denotes the ascension of Christ (comp. ch. xi. 12, where also there is a reference to the ascension), so the words: to God and his throne, denote his session at the right hand of God. It rests on Dan. vii. 13, 14. There the Son of man comes upon the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days, to the heavenly throne of God, "And to him was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, and all peoples, nations, and tongues, shall serve him, his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which does not pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed." Comp. Matth. xxvi. 64, "From henceforth shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power." The throne of God is the symbol of his dominion over heaven and earth, and all that is therein—see my Comm. on Ps. cx. 1. To be set near this throne is to have a share in this divine supremacy over heaven and earth. Christ's participation in the glory of the divine government is still certainly a concealed one during the present course of things. He only who, like Stephen, is full of the Holy Ghost, can see heaven open, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Ch. v. 6 is parallel, "And I saw between the throne and the four beasts, and between the elders, a Lamb standing," where Christ likewise appears in the closest proximity to the divine throne. On the earth, however, from which the child had been snatched away, the hopes of the woman were apparently disappointed, and nothing appears of the tending of the

heathen. But what seemed to cut off hope in this respect was in reality the means that led to its accomplishment (comp. Luke xxiv. 21.)

Ver. 6. *And the woman fled away into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they might there nourish her for a thousand, two hundred and sixty days.* The fate of the woman is here related by way of anticipation, in order to have it placed in juxtaposition with that of the Son. The Seer comes back to it in ver. 14, after he has communicated what was of the greatest moment for understanding her situation after her Son had been snatched away from the earth. By *the* wilderness no particular wilderness is to be understood; but the article stands generically: the wilderness in contrast to the cultivated land. To be *obliged* to fly into the wilderness, into the desert, where no natural sources of nourishment present themselves, is hard; but to be *able* to fly into the wilderness, and so to escape from the persecutions, and there also to be nourished by God, though it should be only with the necessaries of life, as becomes a wilderness-condition, this is great grace. The thought expressed is the preservation of the church under the cross, and in spite of all persecutions and privations. That all local and special historical meanings are to be avoided,[1] is clear not only from the reference to the typical sojourn in the wilderness (God had in ancient times led his church out of Egypt, where the dragon persecuted her through Pharaoh, into the wilderness, and on a small scale had again repeated the transaction in the case of Elias, who fled from Jezebel into the same wilderness, and was there fed by God), but also from passages of the Old Testament, which speak of a leading through the wilderness in a purely spiritual sense—Hos. ii. 14; Ezek. xx. 34—38; Jer. xxxi. 1. 2; and see the Christology on the passages. What is given in Deut. viii. 2—5 as the characteristic feature of the sojourn in the wilderness, and what was also the characteristic feature of our Lord's abode there, the temptation exists also here. The thoughts of many hearts are revealed, when the necessity arises for flying into the wilderness. Who then has, to him it is

1 Even Vitringa's explanation of the sense, God shall take care by his providence, that the church shall be kept and preserved in certain places, remote from human commerce, till the more fortunate times which he has in reserve for his church, still carries the elements which belong to the figure as such, over to the thing. The wilderness is rather everywhere where the church is persecuted, and preserved amid the persecution.

given, but he that has not, from him is taken away even that which he has. What is said of the first sojourn in the wilderness, "He suffered Israel to hunger, gave him also to eat, suffered him to thirst, gave him also to drink, who led him over burning sand, suffered not his shoe to grow old," holds also here; the woman flies away into the wilderness, not to be wasted there but to be nourished; but if the spirit is there singularly quickened and mightily strengthened, the flesh must in consequence fare ill. As for the church at large, so for single individuals the flight into the wilderness is a necessary stage. Canaan cannot be found, if one has not overcome in the conflict with assaults and temptations. The flight of the ideal mother of Jesus, the church, into the wilderness, was typified by the flight of the actual mother through the wilderness to Egypt, who also, in ver. 4, appears as a symbol of the church. The 1260 days of the woman's sojourn in the wilderness, are, according to the solution given in ver. 14, the three-and-a-half years, which on the ground of Daniel's prophecies are taken in the Revelation as the signature of the apparent victory of the world over the church. The number, indeed, has no historical meaning, but is to be estimated only by its relation to the number seven. Considered thus, it conveys an intimation, that the time appointed for the afflictions of the church is a measured one, that these shall not continue a moment longer than has been determined beforehand in the divine counsels, and that it is a broken and short period.

Ver. 7. *And there was a war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels.* Ver. 8. *And he overcame not, and his place was no more found in heaven.* Ver. 9. *And he was thrown, the great dragon, the old serpent, who is called the devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown on the earth, and his angels were thrown with him.* The question here first of all arises, who is Michael? Very different answers have been given to it—for the fullest account of these, see J. Odę de Angelis, p. 1052, ss. According to one view, Michael is no other than Christ, or more correctly expressed, the Word, who in the beginning was with God, and from the first has mediated in all transactions respecting the church on earth. But, according to another view, supported by the Jewish expositors, some authori-

ties in the ancient church, the greater part of Catholic commentators, who in this manner have endeavoured to find biblical support for their angel-worship, and recently among us by Hofmann, Michael is a created angel, who has committed to him the charge of the church, both under the old and the new covenant. The following reasons decide in favour of the first view. 1. The name Michael (who is like God) itself shews, that we must not seek for him in the region of the finite. It rests upon Ex. xv. 11, "Who is like thee among the gods, O Lord," and Ps. lxxxix. 6, 7, "Who in the clouds is like the Lord, comes like the Lord among the sons of the mighty? God is greatly to be feared in the fellowship of his saints, and terrible over all that is round about him." In the name: Who is like God, there must be supplied: Whose glory is represented in me. If we should suppose with Bengel, that the name denotes the infinite distance from God, "the humility of this distinguished angel, and his freedom from all self-elation," *q. d.*, I am not like God, it would be no fit designation of the angel-princes, it would have been more appropriate for the least among the angels, or rather for being used as a designation of men. The derisive imitation of the name Michael in ch. xiii. 4, "And they worshipped the dragon that gave power to the beast, and they worshipped the beast and said, Who is like the beast? and who is able to make war with him?" implies that his name denotes an incomparable greatness and power—the εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, being like God, which is affirmed of God in John v. 18, and Phil. ii. 6. Only when the name is viewed in this light does it appear in a suitable connection with the matter in hand. "In the name Michael," says the Berleb. Bible, "which is applied to Jesus Christ, the Lord of Hosts, there is given the sure pledge of victory. For, since he is supreme over the whole world, and the Father has put all things under his feet, angels, principalities, and powers, including those that are evil, must also be subject to him, and shall ever be so. This, therefore, is the proper person to fight in us and for us; and were he not on our side we should never be able to escape from our troubles." 2. Michael first meets us in the book of Daniel, and there, therefore, we must seek for an explanation of his nature. But that he is there identical with the angel of the Lord, has been proved in my Beiträgen I., p. 165, ss. And what

was said in the Christology in proof of the angel of the Lord being no created angel, but the Logos, still holds good, notwithstanding the pains of Hofmann to invalidate it.[1] 3. What is said in Daniel x. 5, 6, of Michael, "His body was like a chrysolite, his countenance like the lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and his feet like shining brass, his speech like a great clamour," this in the Revelation, ch. i. 13—15, and x. 1, is transferred to Christ, which we cannot suppose would have been done, if Michael had been a created angel. Daniel was so terrified by the voice of the person who appeared to him, that he fell down in a state of utter impotence, and could not for a long time raise himself up. John was affected in a quite similar way by the manifestation of Christ. In ch. ii. 18, also, features in the description of Christ are drawn from Dan. x. 5. 4. What is here attributed to Michael, the conquering of Satan, is in the fundamental passages of the gospels, and here also in ver. 11, attributed to Christ.[2] Vi-

1 No created angel could be described by the Lord as the one, in whom his name was, and his face, (Ex. xxxiii. 14, 15), nor could any created angel have been spoken of by Jacob as having redeemed him, and as blessing his children. To give such pre-eminent honour to a created angel, as Hofmann wishes, is entirely against the position, which is uniformly ascribed in the Old Testament to angels, and would have paved the way for Polytheism. It would also imply a surrender of the Old Testament foundation for the prologue of the gospel of John, which is of essential moment. We lose also the key for explaining the fact, that as in the Old Testament the angel of the Lord and Satan, so in the New Testament, Christ and Satan stand opposed to each other, and that in the New Testament the angel almost disappears. In this one place alone would he occur in regard to the times of the new covenant under the name of Michael. This is incredible if, as the guardian of the church, he was different from Christ. How much has the Old Testament to say of the angel of the Lord? The grammatical reason also for holding that מלאך יהוה cannot mean *an* angel, but only *the* angel of the Lord, also stands firm. Ewald in the last edition of his grammar, § 290, remarks, "A proper name has the same influence as a noun with the article. If the first is to be regarded as indefinite, but the second as definite, the first also can remain so before the article in the status constructus, if no dubiety arises; but should such arise, because in the first word the individual and the indefinite in kind must necessarily be denoted, then the first word cannot be marked by the status constructus." The genitive must in that case be marked by ־ַ, comp. § 292. Such a fundamental rule cannot be shaken by particular passages, in which *it* seems on a slight consideration to be violated. A close investigation shews, that it is observed also in these. In Haggai i. 13 it is not *an* angel of the Lord that is the subject of discourse, but Haggai is called *the* angel of the Lord, to distinguish him from other persons of the same name, but of a different calling. In Mal. ii. 7, the priest is not *an* angel, but *the* angel of the Lord of Hosts, ordinarius dei minister in his kingdom. The prophets alone as individuals have an extraordinary mission.

2 Ode: "Michael overcomes the devil, and throws him down from heaven to earth. But it is evident that the person who accomplishes that great work, is Christ the Son of

tringa says with perfect justice: "If there were another angel besides him, who undertook and accomplished this, a great part of the glory would be taken from the Son of God, which by this name is often ascribed to him in Scripture."—The reasons brought in support of the created angel can easily be set aside. "In the altercation," says Bengel, "with the devil about the body of Moses, he did not dare to bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. This moderation, befitting only in a creature, certainly indicates a created angel." But in that passage of Jude, Michael speaks expressly as the "archangel," as the captain of the Lord's hosts, as the angel of the Lord, and we can as little draw from it a proof against the godhead of Michael, as from the declaration, "The Father is greater than I," we can find a proof against the Lord's equality in power and glory with the Father.[1]—But if Michael is Christ, it may be asked, why should he here be called Michael and not Christ? The answer is, the name Michael points to this, that the work, which is here under consideration, the decisive victory over Satan, belongs to Christ, not after his human, but only after his divine nature—comp. 1 John iii. 8, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning; for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Then, this name forms a bridge between the Old and the New Testament. In the Old

God; see Matth. xii. 29, Luke xi. 22; comp. with Luke x. 18, Hebr. ii. 2, 14, and 1 John iii. 8."

1 Vitringa with justice derives a proof from this very passage *against* the view of a created angel: "That he is the Son of God, is plain from the following passages compared together, Zech. iii. 1, and Jude ver. 9; for he, who is made known in Zech. iii. 2 by the name itself of Jehovah, is called in Jude the archangel Michael." This also is not without weight, that the name of no ordinary angel elsewhere occurs in the whole of this book. When Bengel remarks, "Michael alone is called in Scripture an archangel, and elsewhere archangel is found only in 1 Thess. iv. 16, without the name of the being to whom it is applied. Whether, therefore, there is more than one archangel, or all good angels stand under Michael, as all bad ones under Satan, is a question more easily asked than answered;" two problems are mixed up together, which are essentially different from each other. That all good angels stand under Michael as all bad ones under Satan, cannot be doubted, whenever it is understood, that Michael is no other person than the Logos, the Word. But it may still be matter of doubt, whether there is more than one archangel. It admits of question whether archangel is the designation of the higher angels generally, the "first princes" in Dan. x. 13, or whether it belongs to him who corresponds to the great prince in Dan. xii. 1. But in either case Michael is distinctively the archangel.

Testament Michael had appeared as the great prince who fights for the church, Dan. xii. 1. That battle was the prophecy and prelude of the one reported here.—Bengel again says, "In this battle itself Michael makes the onset. For, it is only said afterwards, that the dragon also fought. But elsewhere this enemy, and the other enemies, always make the assault; ver. 4 here, 13, 17, xvii. 14, xix. 19." Farther, "The battle and the defeat are ascribed pre-eminently to the dragon himself as the principal, and not to his angels; as the Revelation, indeed, in the description of both the good and the evil, is wont to make all, as it were, depend on the head." Because, we add, it is from the head that a cause always mainly proceeds. Michael and Satan are the proper factors of history. All others, however they may push themselves forward, and however much also they may draw upon them the eyes of a short-sighted world, are but subordinate agents and instruments.—The *object* of the battle we already learn from Zech. iii. 1, ss. There the controversy is between Satan and the angel of the Lord, who is all one with Michael, about the sinfulness of the people. Satan desires, that on account of this they may be given up to him still farther. The angel of the Lord rejects this demand, removes the ground of it by imparting forgiveness of sins, and at the same time declares, that a still richer participation of this forgiveness, and in consequence a still deeper confounding of Satan, should take place in the times of Messiah, by which a bridge is raised between that passage and the one before us. There the angel of the Lord stands on the defensive: he defends the people of God against the attacks of Satan; but here he takes the offensive. We are introduced to a more profound insight into this conflict by the fundamental and parallel passages in the gospels. As soon as Christ has become Christ, has received in baptism the fulness of the Spirit, the battle of Satan against him begins, with the view of defeating the work of redemption in its commencement, maintaining his position as the prince of this world, and checking in the bud the reviving glory of the church. In the words of Bengel, "He tempted Christ in the wilderness, and when he was obliged to give way, he withdrew, but only for a season. When the suffering of Jesus came, the enemy again appeared, and the power of darkness raged with fearful violence. But then, too, was the prince of this world

judged. He had acquired over men, who had allowed themselves to be overcome by sin, a right in consequence of this victory; but in the controversy with Christ he had lost all such right, and received judgment against him as a robber and a murderer." Jesus says in John xiv. 30, 31, "I shall not talk much more with you, for the prince of this world cometh, and he hath nothing in me (he has no right in me, because I am without sin, and the territory of Satan extends only so far as sin does); but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do; arise, let us go hence"—namely, that I may meet the attack of this prince of the world. Here Satan is still in the offensive; but in consequence of the failure of his last attempt, in consequence of the obedience of Christ unto death, even the death of the cross, he passes into the defensive, which terminates in the final overthrow. This result, according to our passage, followed after the ascension of Christ. In accordance with this also is it said in John xii. 31, 32, "Now is the judgment of this world (Lücke: 'Its power is immediately judged, condemned and broken in its head'), now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth (Bengel: 'In the very cross there was something that pointed to glory') will draw all to me"—the complete triumph over Satan only mentioned after the completion of Christ's work of redemption. According also to John xvi. 11, the declaration "the prince of this world is judged," is first introduced after Christ's return to the Father, as according to ver. 10 it was only thereby that the justification was perfected. It was, as Bengel remarks, "a very hard process, on which the execution followed." On this execution it is here reported. What Christ had won from Satan through blood and death, (comp. ver. 11, according to which the blood of the Lamb is the root of the whole matter), that is here turned against him. And since he is here once for all cast down to the ground, Christ can let him attempt more, can look calmly on, while he assaults the church; for his attacks can no longer hurt her, they can only advance her real interests. Berleb. Bible: "This all weak and fainting persons may lay to heart, so that they may not surrender the right which they have in God, and God has in them, not reckon the devil stronger than God, as reason is apt to represent him. Judgment has been

given long since, and must be fulfilled in the experience of all his party: they can prevail nothing, if one only withholds one's will from them, as that in which they seek their strength."[1]

The preceding expression: and overcame or prevailed not, serves to explain what follows: his place was no more found in heaven. For, that Satan cannot hold his place in heaven, simply means, that his power is broken—broken, according to ver. 11, through the blood of Christ—for by this forgiveness of sin has been obtained, and thus Satan's most formidable weapon is wrenched out of his hands. All that is powerful is transferred to heaven. In the passage Isa. xiv. 12, which is here specially referred to, it is said of the king of Babylon, the visible image of the great dragon here: "How art thou fallen from heaven, thou bright star, son of the morning," meaning, how impotent hast thou become, thou glorious ruler! In the chapter before us itself in ver. 1, mighty kings appear as stars of heaven, after the example of Dan. viii. 10, and their fall from the region of power is denoted by their being cast down upon the earth. Comp. also ch. vi. 13. Still in Eph. vi. 12, after the decisive victory of Christ, wicked spirits in heaven are spoken of, meaning thereby that they are furnished with much power and dreadful cunning.[2] Comp. also Numb. xxiv. 17, Ps. lxxiii. 9.—Züllig remarks on the being cast on the earth, "For believers on the earth this precipitation of their arch-enemy is certainly not clear gain. Now that he has come nearer to them, he can the more easily persecute them, and does it also, as the sequel shews." This view has the appearance of things on its side; and yet it is found untenable on a closer examination. It is against it, that the simple: he was thrown, denoting the complete overthrow of Satan, in this verse, precedes the other expression: he was thrown upon the earth; it occurs also in ver.

1 The τοῦ πολεμῆσαι is not to be translated with Ewald by: *must* war. This yields no suitable sense. We are rather to supply from the preceding context: had war.

2 Harless, on that passage of Ephesians, still seeks in vain to establish for τὰ ἐπουράνια another meaning, although he is himself obliged to remark: "Even in this epistle the expression served only for a designation of heaven itself, and of all that is divine." Bad spirits are locally as little in heaven as in the air (Eph. ii. 2), as is clear alone from this, that the one destroys the other.—Similar expressions are to be found also in classical authors. Cicero says of Pompey: Quia deciderat ex astris, lapsus quam progressus potius videbatur; and of Antony: Collegam quidem de coelo detraxisti; see for these and other passages in Gesen., Isa. xiv.

10.[1] The view is further opposed by the declaration in ver. 10, as to the salvation, and the power and the kingdom having become God's, and the power of his Christ; and that by ver. 11 the foundation of an absolute victory was given to believers. The mere expression of his being *thrown* upon the earth, renders it impossible for us to think of his acquiring by the circumstance a greater power upon the earth. Bengel's paraphrase, "He was thrown out of heaven, and after being so thrown he took the way toward the earth," with manifest arbitrariness advances what stands opposed to the received meaning. The being thrown from heaven on the earth simply denotes his downfall. Satan's power and opportunity to hurt were not increased by his precipitation from heaven to earth; they were rather checked and weakened; but his rage was increased, being inflamed on account of the damage his interest had sustained, because he had suffered an overthrow, such as had never befallen him since the beginning of the world—an overthrow, from which he can never possibly recover. Comp. the expression in ver. 12: and has a great wrath, and especially the words in ver. 13: And when the dragon saw that he was thrown upon the earth, he persecuted the woman. The fundamental passages also all point in the same direction. The power of Satan uniformly appears in them as broken by Christ, and only his rage as increased—see in respect to the latter, 1 Pet. v. 8. According to John xii. 31, the prince of this world has been cast out of the world by the atonement of Christ; and according to 1 John iii. 8, the Son of God has been manifested for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil. If one should understand literally the throwing out of heaven and the throwing on the earth, we may then say with Lücke, "In John, and in other parts also of the New Testament, excepting the Apocalypse, I find no trace of such a representation." Precisely the same figurative representation is found in Luke x. 18, "I saw Satan fall from heaven as lightning"—a word which our Lord uttered when the Seventy returned with joy and said, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in thy name. If the falling

[1] That the expression: he was thrown here, is quite complete in itself; that: he was thrown upon earth, is only an expansion, is evident alone from the: he was thrown, in ver. 10. The double merely: he was thrown, serves as a commentary on the: he was thrown on the earth; shews, that the being thrown on the earth is only a symbolical designation of his overthrow.

from heaven were to be taken literally, there would be an opposition between these two passages. For here it is affirmed to have taken place before the accomplishment of redemption, but in the Revelation it appears as the consequence of redemption having been accomplished: understood figuratively the opposition disappears. The words of our Lord in Luke refer to the commencement of Satan's overthrow by Christ, which carried in its bosom the germ and the pledge of its completion. Then it proceeds onwards by successive stages, till the last stage is reached in the resurrection of Christ and his ascension to heaven. The same thing is presented to our view under a different image in Luke xi. 21, 22, "When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armour, wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils." Christ here breaks in upon Satan's fortress. This took place as to its *beginning*, when Christ entered on his high calling, and in its *completion*, when he sat down on the right hand of the Father.—The frightful enemy of the human race, "who deceives the whole earth," appears here under four names: the four as the signature of the entire compass of the earth is very suitable for the prince of this world. The "great dragon" stands at the head, even before the old serpent, because Satan comes here into view peculiarly as the prince of this world, as the animating principle of the ungodly world-power, which in the Old Testament is represented under the image of the dragon. The persecution by the world-power forms the starting point. For the consolation of the church sighing under it and ready to faint, the decisive victory of Christ over Satan is here set forth, as that was the pledge of all subsequent victories. The "old serpent" is mentioned here on account of what he did so craftily at the beginning, Gen. iii. 1—5, 2 Cor. xi. 3. In John viii. 44, he is called a murderer from the beginning; and in 1 John iii. 8, it is said, that the devil sins from the beginning. The expression: who is called, stands at the transition from the purely matter-of-fact designations to those, which are at once proper names, and also, as to the substance, belong to Satan. As the two first appellations denote his great power and his deep cunning (as a serpent he deceives, 2 Cor. xi. 3), so do the two

last his intense hostility. The *devil*, properly the calumniator, he is called, as the accuser of the faithful; *Satan*, the adversary, as he who leads astray the whole world—that is, according to ch. xx. 3, 8, 10, stirs them up to fight against the kingdom of God.[1] On the words: his angels were thrown with him, Bengel remarks: "What might be the state and operations of the angels of the dragon before and after this war and overthrow, is not delineated in this book; but mention is made only of the dragon. It is presupposed that the truth is known from other books of scripture."

Ver. 10. *And I heard a great voice in heaven, which said: Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; because the accuser of our brethren is cast out, who accuses them day and night before God.* Ver. 11. *And they have overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and have not loved their lives to the death.* Ver. 12. *Therefore, rejoice ye heavens, and those who dwell therein! Woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil is come down to you, and has a great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.* The *great voice* is such an one on the part of men. "For it belongs to them to speak of their *brethren*, and not the angels, ch. xix. 10. The saints who had formerly overcome, and had now reached heaven, are those who rejoice thus over their brethren as they go thither (?)" Bengel. Comp. on ch. xi. 15. But we can think only of the saints of the Old Testament, not with Ewald of the twenty-four elders. For, twelve of these represent the church of the New Testament, which could not then as yet be represented otherwise in heaven: the voice is heard immediately after the completion of Christ's work of redemption. And the very circumstance of the twenty-four elders not being mentioned here, confirms the view we have taken of the connection. The expression: now is come, is to be explained on the ground, that in this matter is contained the germ and the pledge of all that follows—comp. the equally anticipatory expression: they have overcome him, in ver. 11, and

[1] There it is said: the devil, who deceives them; but the διάβολος is used as a proper name. The connecting together of the two names here renders it probable that an internal difference exists, that respect is had to the original import of the proper name. Ewald would delete the ὁ before σατανᾶς. But from what has been remarked, there is no reason for this. For the sake of the four number alone Satan must stand independently of the devil.

also ch. xix. 6—8, where the saints made perfect regard the marriage of the Lamb as already come, when the victory was gained over the great whore, although still much delay and many conflicts must intervene. Bengel: "The salvation, by which the saints were delivered, the power, by which the enemy was overthrown, the kingdom, which displays God's majesty," comp. on ch. xi. 15, and in regard to the salvation, on ch. vii. 10.[1] The expression: they have overcome him, ver. 11, is to be explained from the clear foresight. Substantially it is as much as, they are able now to overcome him. Parallel is 1 John ii. 13, "I write to you, young men, that ye have overcome the wicked one;" ver. 14, "I have written to you, young men, that ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." The victory is certain through (properly, because of) the blood of the Lamb (comp. i. 5, "Who has loved us and washed us from our sins by his blood," also v. 9, 1 John i. 7. 9, ii. 2), and the word of their testimony—comp. Matt. x. 32, 33, "Whosoever confesses me before men," &c. We have not two quite independent factors mentioned here, but the second, the witness-bearing, has its root in the consciousness of pardon obtained through the blood of the Lamb, according to the sentiment, "Let us love him, for he has first loved us." That blood alone gives power to resist unto blood. Because Christ has humbled himself and become obedient unto the death of the cross, they now no longer love their lives unto the death. Bengel: "Because of the blood of the Lamb—this blood purified the brethren from all sin, and so the accuser could bring nothing against them. And because of the word of their testimony—the word which they believed, and because they believed it, they also spoke and gave testimony to it, and suffered all for it, 2 Cor. iv. 13. This is called overcoming the wicked one, 1 John ii. 14. Where there is such power in the heart, there also will the name of Christ and the righteousness, which is in that name, be confessed without fear."—Those that dwell in heaven, ver. 12, properly, those who *tabernacle* in heaven. By σκηνή, tent, the church is denoted, because the sanctuary representing the church first had the form of a tent—comp. ch. xiii. 6. Accordingly the members of the church, who

[1] The MSS. vacillate between the reading κατήγωρ, an abbreviation that often occurs in the Rabbinical writings, and the usual form κατήγορος.

after the Old Testament manner of representation dwell spiritually with God in his sanctuary, appear here and in ch. xiii. 6 as tabernacling or dwelling in a tent. A similar allusion to the orignal tent-form of the sanctuary occurs in John i. 14, "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us," and also in this book, ch. vii. 15. In so far as the perfectly righteous are denoted by those who dwell in heaven, the object of their joy cannot be, that they have escaped from the personal assaults of Satan (the perfected representatives of the church in ver. 10 know only of the blessed consequences of the overthrow of Satan for their *brethren*), but the church triumphant rejoices over the salvation, which is obtained by the church militant, as they distinctly express their joy in vers. 10, 11. This is plain from the *therefore*. In the preceding context the discourse was only of that which the church on earth, the church militant, had obtained through the overthrow of Satan. But there is no reason for thinking only, or even chiefly, of the saints in glory. According to the mode of representation adopted in the New Testament, the members of the church militant also dwell in heaven; their citizenship is there, Phil. iii. 20; they are risen together with Christ, and sit together with him in the heavenly places, Eph. ii. 6; they have come to the (heavenly) mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, Heb. xii. 22, 23. In this book itself, in ch. xiii. 6, those who dwell in heaven are manifestly the members of the church generally, including those on earth, who have been in a very peculiar manner affected by the blasphemies of the beast, who have been calumniated by him as evil-doers, 1 Pet. ii. 12, iii. 16, iv. 14. Viewed in regard to these members of the church militant, the contrast is not so much one of persons as of spheres of being; in respect to the heavenly one, they have for the object of their joy the peace of God, which they there enjoy, and which Satan can no more destroy; but, in respect to the earthly, they are still exposed to the assaults of Satan, they have sorrow and tribulation in the world, whereby they are tried, and by the trial kept and prepared for glory, 1 Pet. vi. 7. Yet the clear light of heaven shines down upon the darkness of this earthly life. The

sea can here, as in ch. vii. 3, viii. 8, xii. 18, xiii. 1, xvi. 3, xxi. 1, come into consideration only in the figurative sense, as denoting the sea of the peoples, the restless world. Züllig conceives "those threatened upon the sea are partly the inhabitants of islands, and partly such as might be found in ships (!") The time that is given to Satan is marked as a small one, in relation to the eternity of the glory of redemption.

Ver. 13. *And when the dragon saw that he was thrown upon the earth, he persecuted the woman who had brought forth the male (child.)* This is no mere personal description: he persecuted the woman who brought forth the manly son that had thrown him down on the earth—persecuted her because she had given birth to the son, his conqueror—persecuted in her the conqueror himself, whom he could no longer come at. Hatred of Christ is in Satan and his instruments the foundation of their hatred of Christians.

Ver. 14. *And to the woman were given the*[1] *two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished a time, and times, and half a time from the face of the serpent.* This verse corresponds to the sixth. What was already said there is here resumed again, after an account has meanwhile been given which serves to place the situation of the woman in a clear light, the occasion of her flight, the persecution by Satan, and what impelled him to this, at the same time also what gave her in such a condition the hope of a blessed and joyful issue; so that we read here what we have already known with quite new feelings. The only things peculiar to this passage are the two wings of the great eagle which were given to the woman; and, instead of the 1260 days, the time, two times, and an half time. The eagle's wings occur twice in the Old Testament in regard to the first sojourn in the wilderness, Ex. xix. 4, "Ye have seen what I have done to Egypt, and I bore you on eagle's wings, and brought you to me"—into the wilderness, where, under my protection, ye are free from the dominion and persecution of the Egyptians,—and Deut. xxxii. 11, "Like the eagle he stirs up his nest, hovers over his young, spreads out his wings, takes it, bears it on his pinion:" the Lord as the spi-

[1] The article is wanting in Luther, and has been restored to the text only by the most recent editors. It could scarcely have failed on account of the article following.

ritual eagle bore Israel out of Egypt into the wilderness. A reference is made, besides, to Ezek. xvii. 3—7, where the king of Babylon appears as *the* great eagle, the king of Egypt as *a* great eagle. In allusion to that great eagle, the Lord is described as the (true) great eagle.[1] That the wilderness comes into consideration here as a place of security is evident from the whole context. But that the state was one also of privation is implied in the expression: where she is nourished. The natural means of support do not exist there; God must provide for his church in a supernatural way, as of old in the wilderness by manna. The simple expression "where she is nourished," does not certainly of itself necessarily imply that the matter here under consideration belongs to the Seer's own time; and we might explain: where she (then) is nourished. But since it is certain on other accounts that the subject has respect to the present, that a leading into the wilderness forms even the starting-point of the Revelation, there is no reason for departing from the most natural construction. That by the *times* two times are to be understood, may be inferred alone from the circumstance that a definite number is manifestly demanded, hence naturally two as being the first in order; and less doubt can be entertained regarding it since the "times" stand between the one time and the half time. It is a consolatory thought that the sojourn in the wilderness, which, while it serves to quicken and purify the soul, must still always be accompanied with something painful, has a bound set to it. But the consolation grows when it is considered that the three and a half in their relation to the seven suggest the idea of a proportionately small period of time, and so correspond to the declaration in ver. 12, "he knows that he has a short time." But, finally, the consolatory import receives a still farther increase by the verbal reference to the prophecy of Daniel in ch. vii. 25, the clear sunshine of which also at once sheds a cheerful light over

1 Against Ewald, according to whom the great eagle must denote only *a* very great eagle—the article being Hebraistically used as a mark of the superlative—Züllig justly remarks: "This might be listened to, if there were no definite great eagle to be found. It is the same great eagle that formerly bore on its wings out of Egypt into the wilderness, and placed there in safety, the very same allegorical person, called here Zion, there the people of Israel (Ex. xix. 4.)" By Bengel's exposition, which understands by the great eagle the mighty power which gave protection and support to the church after the arrival of the third woe, the empire, the reference to the passages in the Pentateuch is quite overlooked.

this mournful scene. A time, two times, and an half time are there the period during which the little horn was to make war on the saints and obtain the victory over them, and at the close of which things were to take a happy turn for the people of God. Through this prophecy, which refers to the last great conflict and victory of the kingdom of God,[1] the three and a-half generally has been consecrated as the signature of the temporary subjection of the Lord's people running out into victory. It is said in ch. vii. 24—27, "And the ten horns are ten kings that shall arise out of this kingdom, and another shall arise after them, and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak words against the Most High, and he shall disperse the saints of the Most High, and shall attempt to change time and law (he will effect a total revolution—comp. ii. 21, where the expression: he changes times, is used of God); and they shall be given into his hand for *a time, and two-times, and an half time.* Thereafter shall the judgment sit, and his power shall be taken away, that he may be consumed and destroyed unto the end. And the kingdom and the dominion over all kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; and his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." By this prophecy the three and a half years and the dominion of the saints of the Most High over the world are inseparably united together. What holds respecting the last end, must be found also in what is the beginning and exemplar of the end. At the clause: from the face of the serpent, we are to supply: in her flight, or, in her fear. Some with Vitringa connect improperly thus: that she might fly from the face of the serpent. By such a construction the words present an unpleasant drawling appearance. Bengel already remarked, "The woman has her nourishment from the face of the serpent, *i.e.*, the serpent with his persecution cannot come at the woman.

1 In the resumption of Daniel's prophecy of the ten horns, the Seer of the Revelation passes by in silence the small horn, which throws down three of the great horns. But it is very improbable that he altogether left out the matter symbolized by it. Not being touched on in the history of the beast, we must seek for it in the new phase of the enmity of the world against the kingdom of God, which breaks in at the end of the thousand years. Then, there is the consideration, that the Apocalypse, if it does not contain less, so neither does it more than Daniel.

So in Judg. ix. 21, Jotham dwelt there from his brother Abimelech. It has been construed otherwise, that the woman fled from the serpent. But this did not need to be said, as it is evident from the fact, that the dragon persecuted the woman. But this, on the other hand, is remarkable, that she should have her nourishment so long in the face of the serpent."

Ver. 15. *And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might drown her.* Ver. 16. *But the earth helped the woman and opened its mouth, and swallowed up the flood, which the dragon cast out of his mouth.* The water appears in ch. xvii. 15 as an image of the peoples. Under the figure of an overflowing the idea of an overwhelming was not rarely represented in the Old Testament; for example, in Ps. cxxiv. 4, 5, "Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul, then the proud waters had gone over our soul." Jer. xlvii. 2, where it is said in regard to the Chaldean invasion, "Behold waters come out of the mouth, and become an overflowing flood;" Ps. xviii. 16; Isa. viii. 8; Jer. xlvi. 7, 8. The more exact definition appears from ver. 16. By this we learn, that the discourse here is of the hostile overflowing of the church, the commencement of which gave rise to this book —the Roman persecution. With perfect propriety the Berleb. Bible compares 1 Pet. v. 8, the rather so, as there too the Roman persecution is referred to. The *serpent* is named, and not the dragon, in order to point to the *cunning*, which is the distinguishing characteristic of the serpent—Gen. iii. 1. The poor world has been deceived by it. It gives no heed to this, that it is driven on by Satan, and conceives that it acts an independent part in the persecution of the church, and advances its own interest, while it is only working for its own destruction. The earth helped the woman and swallowed up the flood, ver. 16, "which would have swallowed up the believing Israel; so that the matter turned into the reverse." (Berleb. Bible.) Another earthly and worldly power rose against those who persecuted the church, and brought their persecutions to an end, as formerly under the Old Testament the kingdom of the Medes and Persians put an end to that of Babylon. The further [illegible] xvii. By that we learn [illegible]

ten kings, which were themselves of the earth, and gave their power to the beast.

Ver. 17. *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus* (Christ.) The *rest* are those who survived the hostile overflowing in ver. 15, or were not affected by it. The key is furnished by ch. xvii. 13, where it is said of the ten kings or kingdoms, who overthrew Rome, "These have one mind and give their might and power to the beast," comp. ver. 17. Their battle against Christ is depicted in ch. xix. 11, ss. On the last words Bengel has some excellent remarks in his discourses, "In respect to the keeping or maintaining of the commandments of God, it is a great question, whether such is possible to men or not? Those who have attained through the power of the gospel to faith in Jesus Christ, serve God in a n and willing spirit, and this is called keeping the commandments of God. We must not take it in the strictest sense, as if God saw no faults in his most devoted children, for which they needed his forgiveness. No one knows better than he who really exercises himself to obedience, how much it is a matter of indulgence in God to regard the conduct of his children on earth, which is so faulty, in the light of an obedience to his commands. It is in the spiritual life and growth, much as in the natural. When a child learns to walk or speak, there is at every step or utterance some indication of weakness and defect; but matters are always getting better, and blame is not imputed if there is a growth in alacrity and strength. Those who keep God's command, have also the testimony of Jesus. If our hearts are convinced of the truth of this, the mouth shall not fail to deliver a stedfast testimony respecting it, though it should be at the expense of life itself. These are the persons on whom Satan makes war, and hence it is a matter of strong suspicion, if one resile from keeping the commandments of God. Such as do so, the devil readily allows to live at peace."

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